PLAYSCRIPT 105

'the number of the beast'

& 'flaming bodies'

snoo wilson

By the same author

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PLAYSCRIPT 105

THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST and Flaming Bodies

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MAIN

Snoo Wilson

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INTRODUCTION

The Beast was written originally for the Royal Shakespeare Company, and was then a vast sprawling and ambitious play which attempted to account for all the significant background influences on Crowley. His family upbringing in the Plymouth Brethren, a sect of strict and teetotal non-Conformists, with a father who (bizarrely) made money out of beer, was a lay preacher and died of cancer: his sexual initiation, and at the latter end of his life, his removal to a kind of ghostly historical limbo in the company of Frank Harris.

Productions of this version chewed heartily on the subject matter without being able to swallow it. Finally the last indignity was a disgraceful pirated musical version which decided me to write the piece. If anyone was going to tinker with it, it would be me. I set about rewriting it with the help of the New York Theatre Studio, who provided actors' workshops and readings of the play to this end, and so they bear a considerable credit for the play in its present form.

Having left history to look after itself, it was relatively easy to write a play about the man. I am not a social historian and so was pleased to leave social accountability out of the story. Crowley is by most accounts outside The Pale, and there was not much point in trying to explain to people how he got there, if the effort obscured the celebration of his attempt.

In the first act, Crowley's child dies and the fabric of his commune synchronisticly unwinds. In the second act, forced to return to England, he meets a magical opponent of a status which provokes first demonstrations, then envy and disbelief, and finally the separation of Crowley from his sexual alter ego, his Scarlet Woman.

Gerald Yorke, who knew Crowley well without being unduly awed or repulsed by him, described him as a 'false Messiah'. His falsity was very much a part of his time. He was in the Order of the Golden Dawn, a magical order, in London at the same time as W.B. Yeats, but could never decide whether he was poet, magician, hoaxer or gentleman. When one failed he fell back on the other. Like many discontinous characters, it is difficult to know how seriously 'Old Crow' took his messianic duties. The Book Of The Law lay abandoned in a trunk

for years before Crowley decided to take this piece of automatic writing and make it the bible, as it were, of the New Age. When Crowley and Yeats met in the Order's temple in the Fulham Road, the other social revolutionaries were meeting off the Tottenham Court Road in equally unpromising circumstances. Whatever one thinks of the effects of the cult of materialism, in the days of the Golden Dawn, its prophets were as reedy and outnumbered as the table-turners, so I feel one should be ready to forgive the latter their enormous ambitions, for the world; they are simply very much of their time.

Crowley was in fact demonstrating the guru's maddening indifference to worldly acclamation *before* he had enough of it for the attitude to count for much. Unfortunately for him there was also an explosion of print in the form of cheap popular newspapers. Crowley's subsequent career was blighted by his inability to deal with this. The Messiah never managed to turn the fact that Sex Magick made a good headline to his advantage. As is often the case, it never got much beyond being a headline, and the more provocative, learned and religious nature of Crowley's quest got hinted to death, as it were, in the press.

Crowley was not only a practical joker at his own expense, but also a man of considerable intellect who could have been a poet of some stature if he'd had the patience. His career into the 'unconscious' is a voyage taken at roughly the same time as those other giants of inner space, Freud and Jung. While the latter two started as doctors and painstakingly staked out the 'new' area of psychology as their preserve, Crowley was less responsible. He failed to institutionalise himself properly and neglected the essential nurturing of powerful and wealthy helpers who would help him get the New Aeon on the road. Crowley honeymooned in Cheops chamber of the Pyramids, to write The Book Of The Law. Freud went to Paris to study the demonstrations of the great Charcot with hysterical patients, and caught the pithy aside that their problems were 'toujours la chose genitale'. Freud's translation of this into a potent mythology comes with all the trappings of science. His 'scientific' enquiries into the mind are 'scientific' in order to erect a temple of orthodoxy, with the penis at its centre. Only Jung was brave enough to flout this, and wadded into the boggy swamps of magic, astrology, synchronicity, to come up with questions which suggest answers richer and stranger than anything even Crowley was after.

I have allowed Crowley two small magical effects. Concievably, they could be hypnotically induced on the subjects in the play, but I have written them as absolutes, though they should rise smoothly out of the text. I have done this partly to show that magic in the play is like any other kind of reality, a contract between interested parties, and partly as a slight tipping of the hat towards Old Crow, or his shade, who elsewhere in the play I have constrained, without asking, to dance for me.

Flaming Bodies is about a fat girl with agoraphobia who is stuck on the top floor of a skyscraper building in Los Angeles. To live is to fall and she is afraid to descend. In the play I have obliged her to see an aeroplane accident over Ankara, of a particularly horrific kind. It actually took place: one plane tore a passenger plane open over the city and many passengers were tipped out in mid-air. I may have invented the fact that some of the passengers were on fire as they fell, in order to make it a 'better' story and to fit the title, but my own connection with the accident was through a witness who I met four years afterwards: the accident was one about which I had had a premonition strong enough to remember after four years, although nothing else has occurred to link me with the crash beyond my meeting a man who saw it, and on whom it made not unnaturally a strong impression.

Mercedes Mordecai has been fired from her job but continues to haunt the office. The play is about her fears overnight and her accumulation of enough knowledge and self confidence to be able to leave in the morning, even though no externals have changed. In the play, she is obsessed by a story which she has been touting for a film of a female Christ. She is convinced her boss has stolen it. Her nightmares are shot through with the story of her as the suffering hub of the universe.

What happens in the bulk of the play is her dream. She falls asleep and we follow her into her dream life. She is alone. But the end to the character's solitude must happen in order for progress to be made. A car comes through the window of the thirty second floor.

The designer and stage crew did us proud, in the end. But the commissioning theatre was initially fretful and puzzled about the problems of a car bursting into a boxset. Correctly supposing that this concern over technical problem demonstrated a failure to become involved with the script on a passionate, artistic level, I offered the play to the ICA theatre, who put it on, and it was extremely popular. People even queued for returns; it was known as 'the play where the car comes through the window'. I was delighted to have given birth to a play which people liked so much, but the car is a flaming red herring. It marks the beginning of the descent into the Abyss, the unconscious, out of which the main character slowly pieces together the clues that this *is* a dream world, and thereby manages to escape to daylight.

In defence of writing a dream, I would like to say this. I suspect that our ancestors who laid down the foundations of our present brains and nervous sytems may, in the protozoic ooze, have collected and passed down to us a much more careless idea of sequence and understanding than our cognitive, minute-stricken conscious minds know about, and that we are not only playing to ourselves in present time, but to the gallery where sit our ancestors. And they don't quite

understand theatre. Theatre is half folly, and having not invented reason yet, they would have no cause to call upon folly, its opposite. And I suspect that theatre can be an engagement with these monsters within ourselves, though we can never entirely tame them. We are offering sops to Dionysus.

SNOO WILSON

PLAYSCRIPT 105

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THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST & FLAMING BODIES
Snoo Wilson

Often called Britain's 'surrealist' playwright, Snoo Wilson delights in the unexpected, though this is not always evident from a cursory inspection of his subject matter. *Flaming Bodies*, for example, although set in the offices of a computer programmer analysing data for a film company, involves theatrical bombshells such as a car flying in through the top floor of a skyscraper, and a refrigerator turning into a spaceship

Mercedes Mordecai has been fired from her job but continues to haunt the office. What happens in the bulk of the play is her dream. She falls asleep and we follow her into her dream life. She is alone. But the end to the character's solitude must happen in order for progress to be made. A car comes through the window of the thirty-second floor. That such unusual flights of imagination can be woven so carefully into the fabric of the play as to become positively essential to the drama is further proof that Snoo Wilson is a master of intricate plotting and dramatic prestidigitation.

The Number of the Beast lends itself immediately to the lure of mysticism and magic, since its main character is the black magician (some might say charlatan) Aleister Crowley. His group of acolytes live out their days at his commune in Sicily, awaiting imminent expulsion by the police. At the first sign of trouble, Crowley flees to France where we subsequently find him in a kind of magic contest with a lady hotelier who may or may not have been Jack The Ripper.

Although a contemporary of Freud and Jung, Crowley's voyages into the interior of consciousness ended in highly fantastical destinations. *The Number of the Beast* does not set out to show him up as a charlatan or a dangerous seducer, rather as an intellect that was 'less responsibly inclined.'

By the same author:—
Pignight (*with* Blowjob)

Cover design by Brian Paine with a photograph by John Hayes of the Bush Theatre production of The Number of the Beast.

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The Number of the Beast was first performed at the Bush Theatre, London on 4 February 1982. The cast was:

ALEISTER CROWLEY	John Stride
MME POITIER	Maxine Audley
PETERS	Eric Roy Evans
URFF, DIDEROT	Matthew Guinness
NUTTALL	Colin Higgins
RANDY	Steven Mackintosh
GLORIA	Michelle Newell

Directed by Robin Lefèvre

Designed by John Byrne

The play may be doubled for eight characters as follows:

Act One	*Act Two*
CROWLEY	CROWLEY
LARIA	LARIA
PETERS	MAITRE d'HÔTEL
URFF	DIDEROT
NUTTALL	YEATS
GLORIA	MAUD GONNE
NORA	MME POITIER
RANDY	

The Number of the Beast

ACT ONE

CROWLEY *alone. Dusk. Dawn chorus. A figure emerges out of the shadows. Hat, wig, black coat, American.*

CROWLEY. Is that Laria?
PETERS. No.
CROWLEY. Nuttall?
PETERS. Er no, I'm not Nuttall.
CROWLEY. Urff?
PETERS. No.
CROWLEY. Well you must be a burglar. Have a chair. Come from Cefalu?
PETERS. I walked through the night.
CROWLEY. Want to discover your true will?
PETERS. Er–yes–I do.
CROWLEY. Good. Go and stand in the shrubbery, over there, and watch the sunrise with your back to Cefalu. Follow the sun's course through the sky and when it is completely dark, come back to the abbey.
PETERS. Alright.

Exits. The growing light discovers the set, the patio of a broken-down Sicilian farmhouse. Enter GLORIA, *from within.*

GLORIA. I can't sleep. Bloody birds.
CROWLEY. That **word**, Gloria, that **word**.
GLORIA. Oh sorry.
CROWLEY. Who?
GLORIA. *One* is sorry.
CROWLEY. Ruthless self-criticism is the only thing that will ever free you. The I is not free to criticize. The I is trapped in a world of want.
GLORIA. One didn't realise. *(Brightly)* I'll get the razor and cut my arm once for every time–how many times is it?
CROWLEY. A wise riddle to ask the cosmic egg.
GLORIA. I've forgotten.
CROWLEY. That's one more, to what you forgot. Infinity plus one.
GLORIA. Sorry.

CROWLEY. Don't be sorry! Listen to my godlike conversation.
GLORIA. I'll get the razor.
CROWLEY. I. You're punishing yourself to please me. That's not the way.
GLORIA. I'm not.
CROWLEY. Again.
GLORIA. I think you're cruel.
CROWLEY. Your body is your bank. You should be prudent with your withdrawals. *(*GLORIA *is about to exit, but turns.)*
GLORIA. I don't want to do it!
CROWLEY. Quite right, in that there shall be no trade in human flesh. But secretly, you're hoarding. You delay the treatment and the disease only inconveniences you and your friends. You should come to the cure as one goes to a good restaurant, ready to meet the experience with a cheque.
GLORIA. I like my body. I like to give it to you–I don't want to cut it around–
CROWLEY. I . . . I . . . I.
GLORIA. Fuck you. Fuck the whole Abbey of Thelema.
CROWLEY. Impossible to pay the Abbey at Cefalu a greater compliment. What you say, against your own will, is may the Abbey prosper. Blaspheme all we need! The world is turned upside down! We're a pitiful minority! But we're the only people who exist. The rest of the human race, cut off from their subconscious, are nothing but a pack of cards.
GLORIA. You wrote to Trotsky, after the revolution.
CROWLEY. Yes I did write to Trotsky. He didn't reply. For three years after the revolution, Russia was alight with the flame of courage that could have swept the world like a prairie fire. But it went out. *(*LARIA *arrives.* GLORIA *goes.* CROWLEY *moves sofa, sits down and starts sniffing ether.* LARIA *watches him.)* It's getting brighter. Is that me, or the sun?
LARIA. Where've I been?
CROWLEY. As one incarnation said to another.
LARIA. What did you give me?
CROWLEY. Tiny dose of heroin. Harmless.
LARIA. Is it the sun or the moon?
CROWLEY. Excellent! Marvellous! The self-displaced! Your big ugly mouth does it again! Out of the mouths of babes, sucklings, and the Ape of Thoth.
LARIA. Oh Beast . . . I feel awful.
CROWLEY. What you said shows we are right to continue in what we are going. The moon displaces the sun. The first step to freeing the imagination from the dull pedantry of the solar system.
LARIA. Will I live?
CROWLEY. I!

LARIA. I'm too ill to lose blood slashing myself every time I say I. *(Curls up to him on the sofa)* Souls not stuck to the body! One drop more out–and away I go. Dead soul.
CROWLEY *(busy sniffing).* What do you care?
LARIA. I don't mind dying here. I'd rather be here than where I came from.
CROWLEY. My scarlet woman.
LARIA. Beast. *(Pause)* Old Prick.
CROWLEY. No more or less.
LARIA. Beast. Get rid of Gloria.
CROWLEY. The Green Eyed Monster that doth mock . . .
LARIA. She doesn't fit in–
CROWLEY. The meat it feeds on. Why? *(Pause)*
LARIA. Suppose she's a spy from the Sunday Express. Or John Bull.
CROWLEY. In that case, she will have discovered that contrary to to popular belief the Beast 666 does not have a forked prick, from repeated mutual worship and inspection.
LARIA. Spying.
CROWLEY.. Horatio Bottomley leering from between the cheeks of her arse. *(They both laugh fitfully)* Now there's a worthwhile prison for that man. *(Offers ether)* A snort?
LARIA. Why don't you get addicted?
CROWLEY. Character.
LARIA. Where's Satan?
CROWLEY. The dog died when you were ill.
LARIA. What?
CROWLEY. He went off in the hills.
LARIA. How long has he been gone?
CROWLEY. Week . . . two . . . I'd have to look at the diary. He may have been poisoned.
LARIA. Oh no!
CROWLEY. The last time the police came, they heard you call him.
LARIA. He didn't bite them. I was calling him off!
CROWLEY. Yes but they think that a dog called Satan in an incarnation.
LARIA. What's wrong with that?
CROWLEY. Nothing to us, but if you associate Satan with all the unrecognized elements in the unconscious mind, then you've got a dog with a poor reputation. How's Binky this morning? What's she doing?
LARIA. She's asleep. *(*CROWLEY *digs the I Ching out of a corner of the sofa)*
CROWLEY. D'you have any coins? I want to ask the I Ching what she's up for. Life, or . . . I can't do it the other way because little Randy set fire to the yarrow stalks.
LARIA. Oh. The little bastard.
CROWLEY. It was his will.

LARIA. He can't work miracles. He didn't set fire to them with his will!

CROWLEY. No, no, he is an imaginative child. He used a box of matches. Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law.

LARIA. Did you speak to Gloria about it? It's her child. *(*CROWLEY *shrugs)* He already says he's going to kill you and be the beast instead.

CROWLEY. Well we needn't worry for the moment, because his will is very small. *(*NUTTALL *appears completely naked. Genteel Midland accent, gangly, spectacles)*

NUTALL. Do what thou wilt shall be the only law.

CROWLEY & LARIA *(without looking up).* Love is the law, love under will.

CROWLEY. D'you have any small change about you, Nutall?

NUTTALL. Not at this moment. I'm going swimming.

CROWLEY. We're quite without currency and so unable to converse with the I Ching.

NUTTALL. I believe I have a threepenny bit in my waistcoat.

CROWLEY. We need three.

NUTTALL. I shall have to go and get it, you see because at the moment I don't have my waistcoat on. In face if you look you will see that I don't have anything on at all. I've thrown away all my inhibitions this morning, Frater Perdurabo, and just now me and Gloria performed an act of sex magic.

CROWLEY *(refuses to be impressed).* With what object in view?

NUTTALL. We were so carried away with the vital current that I lost sight of the object although she tells me she didn't. The object was to recover the dog, Satan, which I understand disappeared a few days before I arrived.

CROWLEY. What was the orgasm like?

NUTTALL. Well it would have been very good, I predict, as good as on Saturday, but little Randy came into the kitchen and threw pepper all over us.

CROWLEY. Did he leave any for breakfast?

NUTTALL. I don't know. I'll just go and rummage about in my pockets and see if I can get you a few coins. *(he goes out)*

CROWLEY. I really must say. Here we are, threatened with expulsion by the government through the English press, so poor we can't even remain in tune with the unconscious. Half the Abbey members weak with exhaustion from using their bodies as vehicles for their wills, and all they can think to ask about is the dog!

LARIA *(hostile).* What about Binky? Isn't that something wrong as well?

CROWLEY. If it is her will to die, then she will. Look at her progressed horoscope. She doesn't hang on by much.

LARIA. She wants to live.

CROWLEY. Who'd live for crying, and Allinson's gripe water?

LARIA. She had some watered wine yesterday. But she spent all her energy in this frenzy – can't we get Nuttall to get some money from his parents –

CROWLEY. By all means. I already have.

LARIA. Your daughter's dying, and we don't even know what's wrong with her!

CROWLEY. I'm a psychologist really. I can find out what's wrong with people's soul, because I go to their essence -but the body's more difficult. She has a will, to die. She puts her face to the wall-- in the great scheme of things, it's nothing, but one's daughter- it's a bit hard. *(He is upset. Recovers.)* No more ego. No more self. Just the will. The current of the guardian angel is all one needs to listen to. We've had our spiritual crises. Now, it's plain sailing for the Logos of the Aeon and his scarlet woman. *(He sees* NORA *entering.)* Don't look up. It's the paranoid we sent to Coventry, up to spread her morning bile.

NUTTALL *comes back in with trousers.* NORA HENESSEY *comes in by other door. Harris tweed skirt, etc. Nobody looks at her.*

NORA. I know what you think of me. You have not forgotten me. You are all continually talking about me. Tearing my reputation to shreds. Sneering at my poetry--my paintings. You can't go on ignoring real talent, real genius. There's not one of you has any real artistic talent. Not one. The paintings of goats and semen in your rooms are childish pornography. How many of you know what the light is like in the morning on a blade of corn? You don't. You poison your bodies, and you poison your minds against me. But I don't hate you. In fact, I still regard you all as people who might have done something wonderful, but you have turned away from the light. Adultery and grave robbing kills even artists. Dante Gabriel Rossetti died a fat addict at sixty, because his hedonism, his excitement over decay and the macabre ruined his genius. I will not eat cakes of light. They are made of goat dung! You drag your followers down in the mud behind you. You have forbidden them to mention my name and so forth. What power do I have to destroy your fantastic persecution? I know. You know. It's called sanity. You've got to start somewhere. Here are some nut cutlets. This is your last chance. If you eat them today, then I will know that I am welcome. *(Puts them on the table.)* I shall go and spend the day watching the colours change on the sea. I don't want to come back and find them rolled in the dirt, or that the dog's eaten them. They're for you, all of you. I did it because I think you are sick, and you need help. A healthy society wouldn't have to forbid you to look at me, to mention my name! What have I done except declined advances to my body? If you like, that is my will, that I can't do the things which lead to your freedom. But I still exist, don't I?

I've put the little offering on the table. Have a good day.
CROWLEY. Don't touch them anyone. Don't mention that she's been. The ban on discussing her stands. That way, she knows that accusations of gossip are false and malicious. *(She exits.)*
NUTTALL. Three threepenny bits. *(He gives them.)*
CROWLEY. The first one, Nuttall, signifies the disappearance of your pains in the head, the second silences the mysterious voices leading you round Cambridge Circus, and the third opens your puny ego to the flood gates of the unconscious so that the self drowns. *(*NUTTALL *is overcome.)*
NUTTALL *(perturbed).* I don't think I will go to the beach after all. I feel perturbed by this knowledge. I think I ought to go and lie down.
CROWLEY. Practise a magical act by yourself, imagine yourself taken by Pan.
NUTTALL. Alright, anything you say.
CROWLEY. You have a disease. It's called the ego. That's why you get voices. Voices. Voices. . .
NUTTALL. But . . . the last time you said you heard them too.
CROWLEY. If you don't do what your will indicates, then you will get them back. Voices. . .
NUTTALL. Is there anything else I could do, not a magical act?
CROWLEY. Squeeze money from somewhere. How much money is your father sending?
NUTTALL. A hundred–but I'll give it to you when it arrives.
CROWLEY. Wire him to double it.
NUTTALL. It's a lot of money.
CROWLEY. What have you appointed me to instruct you in?
NUTTALL. The discovery of the unconscious.
CROWELY. Silence for a week, fast for two days, and the word 'I' is forbidden on pain of razor.
NUTTALL. When should I begin?
CROWLEY. When it feels right for you. Do things one at a time. If you wire your father, don't feel you have to bathe.
NUTTALL. Oh. Good. *(He leaves.)*
CROWLEY *(shaking coins).* With the lira inflating at the present rate, the longer we leave it, the more we get for our money later on. Invest in Cefalu, you copper bottomed capitalists! Save it all from the coming smash!
LARIA. Is there going to be a smash?
CROWLEY. Oh yes.

GLORIA *comes in with two buckets. One full of water and the other of clay.*

GLORIA. Your child is crying again.
CROWLEY. What did you do?
GLORIA. Came out and told its parents. *(*LARIA *runs off.)*

CROWLEY. Did you know that jealously destroys magic, just as fast as hypocrisy or greed?
GLORIA. It's only natural. *(Pause.* CROWLEY *throws coins.* GLORIA *makes pot.)*
CROWLEY *(finishes doing the I ching).* Hexagram twenty three. . . oh.
GLORIA. What's the judgement?
CROWLEY. The judgement is 'Splitting apart. It does not further one to go anywhere.'
GLORIA. What's the image?
CROWLEY. 'The mountain rests upon the earth. The image of splitting apart. Thus those above can only ensure their decision by giving generously to those below.'
GLORIA. Any lines?
CROWLEY. Nothing else. That's it.
GLORIA. Somebody's going to leave.
CROWLEY. I'd like to think it applied to Nora Hennessey leaving the Abbey, rather than Binky leaving life. But whichever it means, it advises submitting to the bad time and staying quiet.
GLORIA. You'd better take its advice.
CROWLEY. 'It does not further one to go anywhere.' *(stands)* We'll have to do it here.
GLORIA. Do what?
CROWLEY. Carve a hole in the future. Right here.
GLORIA. But it says–
CROWLEY. Take my body. Consecrate with yours! Now! As you took Nuttall to pray for the dog. The duty we have lies with ourselves. Fay ce que vouldras. The world is ours only to discover our true will. Let's perform.
GLORIA. We didn't finish with the dog.
CROWLEY. Alright for the dog. And money in the post. And Binky.
GLORIA. Not Binky, not money.
CROWLEY. The world is alive with channels and currents and some of them run with gold.
GLORIA. I only want to do the dog.
CROWLEY. The dog then. *(Advances)* Smell me. I'll eat you. I'll make lunar cakes of the skin from your breasts and menstrual blood, and we'll find Satan for a start. You don't have to do Binky right away. Wait till it feels right for you. Smell me. *(She does reluctantly.)* And is it this anointed body that you shall touch.
GLORIA. It is.
CROWLEY. You dog whore. You dog faced bitch titted snarl jowled dog. Bitch in the manger. *(*GLORIA *is enjoying this.)* Bitch. Bitch. *(*GLORIA *closes her eyes.)*
GLORIA. Do the dog, do the dog, Satan, Satan . . . *(They stand, close but not touching.)* I can feel Satan's body . . . his claws, his hot breath . . . bush tail and a big, red cock . . . I wanted to take the

cock and the glory of Horus and the great work–shove it in the flames of fornication.

CROWLEY. Show it. Love that dog. Bring him close. Don't let him go.

GLORIA. Love it.

CROWLEY. A dog. A magical dog.

GLORIA. Where are you? Come back . . . Sweet doggie . . . sweet doggie . . .

CROWLEY. Good, very good, now later on at the moment of orgasm I want you to concentrate on Binky–*(They open their eyes.)*

GLORIA. It's no good. I don't love him. I love the dog. Sorry.

CROWLEY *goes back and lies on sofa. Defeated. Puts hat over eyes.*
NUTTALL *comes back.*

NUTTALL. Er. Frater Perdurabo. I was lying on my bed in a fever of discovery of your explanation of the relationship of the unconscious to the conscious.

CROWLEY. Before you start–have you wired your father yet? For the three hundred pounds–Four hundred pounds?

NUTTALL. I would like to thank you–

CROWLEY. Are you deaf too?

NUTTALL. What?

CROWLEY. Are you deaf too?

NUTTALL. Er no–

CROWLEY *(fast).* I asked you about your father.

NUTTALL. Er–

CROWLEY. What?

NUTTALL. No.

CROWLEY. What?

NUTTALL *(quickly).* No I didn't.

CROWLEY. Little flurry of words. What were they again?

NUTTALL *(courage).* No I didn't. *(Pause)* I didn't mean to shout.

CROWLEY. You didn't mean to what?

NUTTALL. Shout! But I will soon, send for the money.

CROWLEY. The last bit?

NUTTALL. Which?

CROWLEY. The bit about the money.

NUTTALL. Soon.

CROWLEY *(magnanimous).* There's no hurry.

NUTTALL. I'll do it before lunch. I just wanted to thank you for your help.

CROWLEY. Not at all. It's practically involuntary. Sheer musings aloud on the human condition. But Nuttall you must be prepared for–very soon–this whole situation to precipitate itself in a spiritual crisis. I could create money, but what's the point of behaving like the treasury? This is going to be a test

of your faith.

NUTTALL. My father's a stern man.

CROWLEY. Precisely.

NUTTALL. I'll have to grovel and tell him lies.

CROWLEY. If you are true to yourself, you will find that you hate your father.

NUTTALL. I sometimes wish him dead. Yes.

CROWLEY. Lying to him should be a pleasure then. Tell him you broke three legs.

NUTTALL. Oh he'd never accept that–

CROWLEY. Wasn't your third leg permanently dégonflé when you came here? And hasn't it been put together well? I mean it's worked on absolutely everybody. It's a distaff! A broom-handle! A pillar of the Great Work! You, not money, are the centre of all creation!

NUTTALL. I'll tell him. Something else. Maybe. . . something expensive, I don't know.

CROWLEY. Good man.

NUTTALL. This instant.

CROWLEY. Love and do what thou wilt.

NUTTALL. I do this out of love for you, and Gloria, and Laria and Binky–and little Randy and love is the will, love under law. *(Exits.)*

CROWLEY. I must be the greatest psychologist in the world. I can cure people if they allow it. The next religion after Crowleyanity's going to be a poser. I mean, when the many are reduced to one, to what is the one reduced? *(Lies down.* GLORIA *makes pot.* CROWLEY *starts up.)* Footsteps? Did I hear footsteps?

GLORIA. No. *(*RANDY *comes in silently with the mail, behind.)* The mail's come.

CROWLEY *(interest).* The post! There must be about six weeks worth there. A block on Mercury, the winged messenger has gone, as predicted. Here. *(*RANDY *doesn't move.)* Bring it here, Randy. *(*RANDY *doesn't move.)* Alright, give it first to your mother, and then to Uncle Alick.

RANDY. Beast.

CROWLEY. Alright, Uncle Beast.

RANDY. Beast 666.

CROWLEY. Uncle Beast 666. *(warmly)* The wickedest man in the world. . .

RANDY. Beast.

CROWLEY. Come on, Randy, you've got the future of our whole world in your hands. Don't be shy of it. Put it in piles, one for each person. *(Pause)*

RANDY *(villainous).* Sssss

CROWLEY. Here. *(*RANDY *drops a couple of letters and retreats, his arms full, eyes still on* CROWLEY. LARIA *comes in.* CROWLEY *passes the letters to her.)* From your mother.

The ADULTS *stand in a menacing ring round* RANDY.

GLORIA. Randy. Come to mother.
CROWLEY. We're all equal here, you don't have to give them to your mother if you don't want. We're all your mother. Come to mother. Just divide them up.
LARIA. Thank you for my two Randy, they are very nice and welcome. Could I have some more addressed to me?

RANDY *is concerned against the audience. He starts to tear the mail up. They all grab for him and stop him halfway.*

RANDY. I am the Beast! I am the Beast!
CROWLEY. No, I am!
RANDY. I shall be the Beast, I shall be–spear you with my evil eye–and make you listen to me and what I say–I'll turn you into pissy toads.
GLORIA. Randy–
RANDY. Pissy toads. And I'll stick a straw in you and blow you up till you burst. Pus.
GLORIA. Not your mother, you won't.
RANDY. Yes I will. I am the Beast! You're a shitbag. You made me. I am the Beast etc. etc. *(Flees off out of their clutches, exits.)*
LARIA. Can't you control him?
GLORIA *(protective).* You shouldn't ask him to do things he can't do! It upsets him!
LARIA *(having got most of mail).* Fascinating.
GLORIA. You shouldn't ask him to do things he can't do!
LARIA. Like stop himself from setting fire to everything!
GLORIA. Beast shouldn't have asked him *(voice quavery with protectiveness)* to parcel the letters out–so aggressively. *(Pause)* He can't read. *(Pause.)*
CROWLEY *(ironic).* Oh, excellent.
GLORIA. It's like asking a cripple to dance.
LARIA. He could learn!
GLORIA. He is slow. Where are the schools here?
LARIA. Nobody's ever tried to teach him.
CROWLEY. And why should they? I think he's a very interesting specimen as it is.
GLORIA. He's my son!
CROWLEY. What does it matter? He's the child of everyone here.
GLORIA. He's my son! I had him before I came, and I'm going to take him away with me.
CROWLEY. Is he going to learn to read before you leave? *(Pause.)*

LARIA. He's uncontrollable.
GLORIA. He's overtired.
LARIA. So are we!
CROWLEY. Ah. Here's a letter to Urff, addressed to 'The One Eyed Worm, Cefalu, Cicily.' *(*CROWLEY *opens packages.)*
LARIA. What's that?
CROWLEY. Papers, You can have it. *(He gives them to her, uninterested.)*

LARIA *opens paper. Sunday Express. Headline,|AT ALEISTER CROWLEY'S UNSPEAKABLE ORGY. DRUG FIEND EXPOSED. DISGUSTING RITES. Another–John Bull.*

LARIA *(reads).* 'Disgusting black magician practises|foul rites with numerous women. Exclusive interview.' INTERVIEW! Joanna Hammett. . . the traitoress! . . . She was only here for lunch! 'The ex-debutante closed her eyes and went pale. I cannot describe it.' She's as much of a deb as my arse is!
CROWLEY. They make them up. They didn't get an interview.
LARIA. Well, they described her jewellery right. Pendant green stone–'Crowley fixed me with his hypnotic gaze and said, I am the wickedest man in the world. I sacrifice children. I like their blood.'
GLORIA. Do they mean that about Binky?
CROWLEY *(wearily).* No.
LARIA. There's a description of the Abbey. 'A low farmhouse without sanitation. The bushes or the sea are used for toilet purposes. . . ' *(*CROWLEY *deigns to look.)*
CROWLEY. They've got all the colours wrong. Blue for brown–brown for red. So magically it cannot harm us.
LARIA. 'Goats are used. Bodily functions are openly talked about and foul rites practised every night with cockerels. The police are keeping an eye on the situation, and the British Consulate has been urged to expel these loathsome practices from the fair shores of Sicily before they sully the name of Albion further.'
CROWLEY. This is the century of the common man. Anyone in the least unusual is attacked.
LARIA. But this is serious.
CROWLEY. It's nonsense.

URFF *comes in. Has just got up. Brown dressing gown, one eye, bedraggled, notebook.*

URFF. Letters for me?
CROWLEY. No.
GLORIA. There is one.
CROWLEY. But it's for the great worm. You're not the great worm, are you, Urff?
URFF. Whose number is 654 673 131. One is the great worm.

CROWLEY. Which one? I'll open it. *(There is money in the letter* CROWLEY *opens. No reaction from* URFF.*)*
LARIA. Money!
CROWLEY. Twenty pounds. Cast it on the water, Urff? *(Pause.)* Here.

CROWLEY *passes over Urff's letter to* URFF, *with the money in it.* URFF *trudges off with it. No expression.*

LARIA. This is dangerous! They say they've written to the British Consul in Sicily.
CROWLEY. What can he do? He won't have the power to act.
LARIA. Italy has a Fascist government. They'd love to be seen to be cleaning things up.
CROWLEY. I'm buggered if I'm going back to England. Look at the persecution even a modern novelist like poor Lawrence had to endure–hounded from pillar to post–till he has to leave–branded obscene–all the poor fellow did was to discover the obvious, that nobody in England had thought of, that coal miners had sexual feelings like the rest of us. If they do that to a humble scribbler, what are they going to do to the Logos of the Aeon? We won't go. Don't worry.
GLORIA. Where did Randy disappear to? *(*GLORIA *goes. She calls off.)* Randy!
LARIA. What if we all discovered our wills, and not just you?
CROWLEY. Religions are autocratic. As my scarlet woman you must have discovered yours. The rest are free to find theirs, or, not. If they find them, they are free in themselves. If they don't know how to look, then they are free to follow the herd.
LARIA. When you were away I missed you. *(*CROWLEY *nods, satisfied.)* I was sick, but a tall man from the East came for a few days and my strength returned.
CROWLEY. I saw in your diary. There's only one act recorded. How many acts were there?
LARIA. Four, and one which had to be abandoned.
CROWLEY. Must keep up your diary. How's Binky?
LARIA. Pale. She's breathing heavily.
CROWLEY. She's probably just inherited my bronchitis.
LARIA. She clutches at her chest.
CROWLEY. My asthma–
LARIA. Isn't there anything she's inherited from me?
CROWLEY. There are probably plenty of details which we'll see when she grows up, but it needs me to see them.
LARIA. She's not a doll, you know, she's alive and she's not something you made up. She's got a life to lead!
CROWLEY. Laria, I fear very much, that the secret chiefs have decided to let her have her will. The I Ching readings point to only one conclusion. It is her will to die. When I was young, I

never thought the path entailed so much suffering. The Secret Chiefs are trying to extinguish one of my selves. *(Decides)* Well, we'll fight them.
LARIA. What with?
CROWLEY. Magick, with a K. We believe every man and every woman is a star, that their being is incandescent, and we must search for power to transform the world. It comes from the self. I transform you. You transform the world, there is nothing apart from the self, the self is. . . everything. *(He gets the pot, squashes, wets it, and begins to daub* LARIA's *back.)*
LARIA. No–she'll be back.
CROWLEY. The rotten potter has left the wheel. God is dead. The pot was a flop.
LARIA. She'll be back.
CROWLEY. You've got a fine big ugly mouth. The best thing about you.
LARIA. She'll think it was me.
CROWLEY. Nothing happens but you two find an excuse to get at each other! *(*CROWLEY *pauses.* URFF *comes back in.)* There is one thing we haven't tried for Binky. Nuttall, by the left had way in the temple. He has always refused–I think he thinks he's got to play the woman. But he's come on a lot in the last couple of days. He got it up and fucked Gloria. . . Urff's current is down. He wouldn't be any good for a magical act.
URFF. I love Laria.
CROWLEY. Love is the law.
URFF. I want to marry her. I think she's the most beautiful woman in the world.
CROWLEY. Urff, you are breaking the law. The law says no trade in human flesh. The scarlet woman must be brazen and adulterous.
URFF. That is why.
CROWLEY. She must. She's not to be married. That's no good.
URFF. Yes.
LARIA. I don't want to marry him anyway.
URFF. It's true, I'm not worthy of her. I can do the Cabala, but my body isn't up to my brain. My body is a broken reed, but my soul burns with red, blue, green, black, and the numbers 6455231 which designate the great wheel. I'm a shard, a broken wheel. Unless you mend me. According to the law. It says that the scarlet woman shall be adulterous.
CROWLEY. Yes
URFF. Well, how can she be adulterous unless she marries?
CROWLEY. Oh, Urff! Adultery isn't to be taken literally. When it says 'adultery' it is drawing the pus from the reeking sewer of bourgeois morality, which will enable the world to embrace The Law.
URFF. Please
CROWLEY. No.

URFF. It's because I'm not attractive, you see—Laria knows her will and can dominate me. Perhaps if I had some of the beast's musk oil. . .

CROWLEY. My dear Urff, the oil, correctly used, commands obedience from the bodies around. Smeared on you, it would only be a pathetic request. Concentrate on the worm at the base of your soul. Realize yourself, and you won't have to ask permission to do anything again. Embrace the worm. You are the worm. You have one eye. You are the one-eyed worm.

URFF. I lost an eye but that was an accident.

CROWLEY. Accident? Ha! When have there been accidents!

URFF. I had a dose of clap, and—

CROWLEY. Clap in the eye? Good man. Now I know what they mean when they say—'See him off!' You are, with your one eye, the worm. You are the base of creation, the restless, plangent devastating matrix of countless stellar collisions. Your blood is in the stars. The stars are in your blood. Nothingness, with tiny points of light. You pulse, you rave, you roar, you take villages, towns, cities and continents by storm! Burn, rape, pillage, stamp out pity, and the incidental pity for yourself. The uglier, the more hideous gross misshapen you are, the closer to magic comes your every act. The closer you are to magic, which only exists in the night, in the grotesque.

URFF. But I want Laria because she's beautiful.

CROWLEY. No, you want her because she's ugly, and because you despise yourself for having sexual feelings, and you despise your body.

URFF. I quite like fucking, actually.

CROWLEY. Yes, but—**think**! You have to **think** while you're on the job! Invest it with as much care as any cabalistic problem. That is what it is! Think! You are the worm.

URFF. I am the worm.

CROWLEY. I am the Beast. This is my scarlet woman.

URFF. This is my scarlet woman. *(A correction)* This is the Beast's scarlet woman.

CROWLEY. Beast tramples on the worm, the worm turns and strikes the beast. Worm, scarlet woman—write—couple—taste. Make an affirmation. Make power by a magical act. Discover your wills. *(Joins their hands, goes out.)*

LARIA. You are the worm.

URFF. The worm that turns. The worm in the bud.

LARIA. This is the work of the beast. *(Shows him mark between breasts.)*

URFF *(peers)*. He always gets the number of the worm wrong. *(They break from each other.)* Well, Laria, in the Cabala, you cannot describe the essence separately from its numerical quantity. The world is divided into twenty-two essential numbers

and any one entity can be described by choosing a sequence of interstices. So it'd be like calling you Mary, or Tom. Because we have names and numbers, it's difficult, but when the Law is universal, it'll be much easier—a week'll be. Oneday, Twoday, Threeday, Fourday, Fiveday, Sixday, Sevenday, Eightday, Nineday, and on the twenty-second day, we rest. *(Enters* PETERS. *Moustache, black coat, black hat.)*

PETERS. Hello, I'm the new acolyte. Mr Crowley told me to stand in a thorn bush but I think I'm having heat stroke, so I may have to do it another day. I am extremely interested in what you're doing here. . . What I wanted to know, was, whether you're going to have any orgies today.

URFF. Orgies?

LARIA. What kind of orgies?

PETERS. Where everyone takes their clothes off.

LARIA. People take off their clothes if they're hot. It doesn't mean to say they're going to have an orgy.

PETERS. What else does it mean?

LARIA. Bathing in the sea.

PETERS. Oh. I see. Bathing in the sea with your clothes off.

LARIA. How long are you going to be here?

PETERS. Well, Mr Crowley told me to look at the sun. But I can't follow it anymore. I'm almost blind with watching.

LARIA. Well, are you going to do it?

PETERS. It makes me feel funny. I bet he couldn't follow the sun up and down.

LARIA. That's just the start.

PETERS. I get heatstroke. I think I'll sit in the shade, here.

LARIA. If Frater Perdurabo told you to stand in the sun, he must have had a reason.

PETERS. Sit down. . . in the shade. . . I'd like some water—d'you have any—? *(drinks from pottery bucket)* just like to sit in the shade a bit—rest—I've come such a long way. But not to stand in the sun. *(*CROWLEY *appears. Lathering his head and chin with a shaving brush.)*

CROWLEY. If you agreed to stand in the sun, then you can't do anything else.

PETERS. I've been walking all night.

CROWLEY. Off you go. You've embarked on the search for self, and you must submit to the rigours of the course. As you look into the sun. say to yourself, Sanguis et semen. *(Pause.* PETERS *looks to* URFF *and* LARIA *for help, but none comes.)*

PETERS. Sanguis et semen. Sanguis et semen. *(Exists.)*

URFF *(interested)*. He's almost fainting!

CROWLEY. We've been carrying too many passengers. Urff, detain Nuttall at all costs when he comes in from the sea. Don't let him off into the hills.

URFF. How?
CROWLEY. Seduce him with your charm.
URFF. I don't have any.
CROWLEY. The flies are attracted to you, Urff, there must be something there. *(Exits.)*
URFF. Why does everybody persecute me? I don't like being persecuted. I want to marry you, Laria. Then you can be adulterous. I wouldn't mind which whore I was married to–you, or Gloria. . . but I would like to be married to someone, so that I could be free.
LARIA. Free for what?
URFF. So that I could say, you're mine, you mustn't do that, when they are bad, and they could beat me for obstructing their will.
LARIA. That's the wrong way round. That's how the world does it.
URFF. I have this need, for people to see me as a worm.
LARIA. You are a worm. The Beast told you.
URFF. He wants me to be a big worm, and I'm really small. He wants me to rear myself up on end, but I want to go along the ground, that your heel shall crush my head. I can't rebel, like worm ought to.
LARIA. The Will is rebellion. The weak are crushed.
URFF. Teach me how to rebel.
LARIA. You are weak because you despise yourself, and are divided.
URFF. Yes, but which half must I obliterate.
LARIA. One must eat the other up.
URFF. The worm must eat up the self.
LARIA. Now as happens all the time.
URFF. Teach me. Teach the worm how to rebel.
LARIA. You can't teach it, you can only learn it.
URFF. The way I wish to learn it, is to be beaten again, by you extremely hard. Sanguis et semen ad terram spiritum conferrat. Smother me till one or the other rebels. Stamp on my face. Bury me deep in the earth. One or another will conquer, I will become whole. Take the skin off my back and cram it in my mouth. I can't find me. I'm lost–pity me. Kick my teeth in.
LARIA. No.
URFF. You would do it willingly if you knew how I felt!
LARIA. You wouldn't ask, if you knew how I felt!
URFF. It is my will that it is done!
LARIA. It doesn't help! It doesn't help! You've got a twisted personality, Urff, and there's nothing I can do! I don't know how to help you find your true self, but it's not like that! Not by making me go through torment!
URFF. Well, what do you do with the Beast?

LARIA. He's strong! He allows himself to be tied, because he is strong! But you want to be tied because you're weak!
URFF. Damn you! Damn you!

He starts slowly to kick, punch and bite himself, glowering at LARIA. GLORIA *comes in with a bowl of henna.* LARIA *and* GLORIA *ignore* URFF.
Tableau with URFF *kicking, biting and so on for ten seconds. Blood comes out of his mouth. He stands forward to them.*

URFF. I've done it. I've bitten my tongue. Look. I'll bleed to death, now, and then you'll be sorry. *(Neither of them looks. He goes.* GLORIA *mixing up henna in bowl.)*
GLORIA. My arms are so sore.
LARIA. What's the matter?
GLORIA. We had a first person singular pruning session.
LARIA. Don't let him make you lose blood on that. I mean, we're not children.
GLORIA. I hate the smell of this stuff.
LARIA. Henna is good for one's hair and it turns it red which is the colour of haloes, colour of the sun.
GLORIA. Well, mine goes maroon. *(Pause)*
LARIA. Why do we quarrel over this man if we know that love is not possession? *(Pause)*
GLORIA. I don't know. Lust?
LARIA. Lust is work. Surely we're not quarrelling over work like a couple of secretaries. . .
GLORIA. I–
LARIA. One. . .
GLORIA. One doesn't know.
LARIA. You'll get used to it. We have not secrets. We're all bound for glory.
GLORIA. Three's a difficult number.
LARIA. The Beast would like to have four wives, like in the Koran. I keep pointing out to him that he does if he counts the men. It is strange that after all the fights one goes through in the name of freedom that one always comes back to the family whether you want to or not. Here we are, from the far corners of the world, thinking we're independent of our past, and in reality we're all just like Urff. Banging our heads against the wall. If I had a better past to return to I'd go there. You don't understand that, do you? You want to be his number one. Well, I'm his number one. Whether Binky lives or dies and if you don't like it you and Randy can fuck off back where you came from. (RANDY *rushes on.)*
RANDY. I'm going to be the Beast! I've seen a sign! I've seen a sign!
GLORIA. What was the sign, dear?
RANDY. Satan! He's dead in the gully with his tongue out and I

can tell it's a sign because his eyes are open and he's shit himself and has anyone got a pickaxe?

GLORIA. Why do you want a pickaxe?

RANDY. I want a pickaxe! So I can bury him. *(*GLORIA *gets him a pickaxe.)*

GLORIA. Alright, dear, go on.

RANDY. I want to bury him so that no one else will see him and his yeeargh face and body all swollen up and all the power and the flies will be mine. He's been shot through the tummy so that his guts are coming out but I'll put them back in so that he can serve me. He'll always be behind me. I shall be the Beast! *(Goes.)*

GLORIA. There's a good boy.

CROWLEY *comes out pursued by* URFF.
CROWLEY *oiling himself, in bathrobe.*

CROWLEY. Where's sailor Boy Nuttall?

GLORIA. No one's seen him.

URFF. Take me! You said you liked ugly people!

CROWLEY. Go and read the Liber Legis, Urff. You're under everyone's feet! You've got to take me when you're ready.

URFF. Ha! That's it! Always talking as if you were Jesus bloody Christ and I was some turd you'd stepped on in the street!

CROWLEY. Turd is about it, Urff.

URFF. Worms! Turds! Can't I scrape comparison with humanity?

CROWLEY. There's no such thing. They don't exist, they're ciphers like Tarot cards. You're a worm. Learn to live with unreality.

URFF. That man getting sunstroke out there is real.

CROWLEY. Nonsense. *(Pause)* I invoke Nuttall. My spirit summons Nuttall. *(Incanting)* Nuttall, become material. Arise from the vasty deep. *(*NUTTALL *comes in. Lightly)* Ah, Frater Omnia Smegmam. Refresh yourself with a little cocaine.

NUTTALL. I have sent the telegram. And I asked for four hundred pounds.

CROWLEY. What a bold man you are, against your father.

NUTTALL *(taking cocaine).* Oh, this is such a great pleasure it's unnatural.

CROWLEY. It heals the sick, Nuttall, it raises the dead.

NUTTALL. My father has heard of you. Once—your name was in discussion. He said he had heard that Somerset Maugham had based a book on you.

CROWLEY *(delighted).* Yes! He did! Young Maugham came to Paris—we all thought he was terribly green and couldn't lay one whore in front of another—but it turned out the puppy could write.

NUTTALL. It was common gossip that it was a portrait of you.

CROWLEY. I told Maugham I ate babies. From the extremities in order to save the tasty bits to the end. The only man who didn't believe me was Frank Harris.

NUTTALL. Is he a friend of yours too?

CROWLEY. Oh yes. He was.

NUTTALL. My father said he was a bad man too. *(*RANDY *enters and watches from the back.)*

CROWLEY. No doubt at all. He was a journalist. You see what journalism is doing to us.

NUTTALL. My father said Frank Harris took advantage of over 10,000 women. Is it true?

CROWLEY. Of course. Why does your father not like you?

NUTTALL. I've never been able to live up to his idea of me.

CROWLEY. How does it feel in there? *(Peers at* NUTTALL.*)*

NUTTALL. Good. Yes, very good. *(*NUTTALL *is high. He sniffs again.)*

CROWLEY. A little brandy? *(He drinks.)* A little more brandy? *(They all watch* NUTTALL.*)* What is the Law?

NUTTALL. Love and do what thou wilt.

CROWLEY. That's St. Augustine's law. What's ours?

NUTTALL. Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law. *(*NUTTALL *goes downstage.* PETERS *comes in. Still has overcoat on.)*

PETERS. The sun. . . The sun *(*PETERS *stands centre stage.)*

NUTTALL. This man is death. Is going to take your daughter away.

PETERS. Take me in.

GLORIA. D'you want a drink?

PETERS. Take me in, Please.

NUTTALL. **Don't** let him in! Resist evil. This man is to take your daughter away. Can't you see, you fools, he's dressed in black? Don't do it. Get him off before he forces your hand. He's come to take your daughter away. Off the premises. . . *(*NUTTALL *is warming to his theme of bearing witness.)*

PETERS. Sun. Sun. . . sun.

NUTTALL. Get out! Leave Binky alone.

PETERS. Who?

CROWLEY. He's a neophyte, Nuttall, not a baby snatcher.

NUTTALL. I must impress on you all the importance in rejecting death from your doorstep. Death is not part of our natures. He is an invasion. The Abbey must become a fortress. It's not just Binky. It's all of us.

CROWLEY. You're rambling, Nuttall. Come to the Temple with me.

NUTTALL. Though he'll start with the weakest—the little baby. We must eject the intruder.

LARIA. What do you want with us. *(Nervous)* Where are you from?

PETERS. The sun. . . please. . . it's too difficult. . . the sun. . .

poor Peters.

NUTTALL. The rock! Ha! The rock! We're floundering! We've been holed by Christianity! Don't you see? He's called **Peters**! The rock! Keep him out! Keep death out! Brain him, kill him! Strangle him! Chase him, wipe him out! Kill! Kill! Kill! The rock! The rock!

NUTTALL *has concluded bearing witness and retires upstage, but* LARIA *has been taken over by his message.*
She flings herslef at PETERS *in a frenzy. Quickly* CROWLEY *pulls her off.*

LARIA. Go away! Go away!
PETERS. The sun. . . *(*PETERS *is lying collapsed downstage.)*
URFF. You'd never do that for me–
CROWLEY. Do you want to come in out of the sun?
GLORIA. Randy, get him some water. *(*RANDY *goes and gets the water,* LARIA *weeping, exits with* CROWLEY. URFF *exits.)*
PETERS. I have come from far away.
GLORIA. Would you like a drink?
PETERS. I close my eyes and I can see dancing. . .

RANDY *comes back, gives* PETER *water.* PETERS *sits up, begins recovery.*

GLORIA. You can stay as long as you like.
PETERS. Thank Christ for that.
GLORIA. Where did you hear of us?
PETERS. When I was in Venice.
GLORIA. When were you there?
PETERS. Earlier.
GLORIA. What did you see there?
PETERS. Mostly water.
GLORIA. You don't like architecture.
PETERS. It keeps the rain off.
RANDY. Where you from?
PETERS. Hi, shorty. *(At large)* The whores in Venice are amazing. They hang around the street corners treading water. The ones who haven't learnt to swim have waterwings. D'you have waterwings, sonny?
RANDY. Answer the fucking question!!
PETERS. Er–I'm a magician. I live on my wits, not off other people's shit. *(Mysterious)* And I come from the astral plane, sonny.
RANDY. Show me a trick.
PETERS. I will make a talking white mouse.
RANDY. What d'you need?
PETERS. Whatever you use round here.
RANDY. We use sex magic round here to get what we want.
PETERS. Is this what you want? *(Gestures to the Abbey)*

RANDY. Yeah.
PETERS. Humble, for magicians.
RANDY. Get on with it.
PETERS. I need a jug of iced water, a loaf of bread, and a piece of cheese.
RANDY. That's a meal! I want to talk white mouse.
PETERS. You'll get it.

He tries Nora's nut cutlets, and pockets one for later.
RANDY *goes and get a small piece of bread and soft cheese.*

RANDY. Right! Make a mouse. *(*PETERS *starts eating.)* Hey!
PETERS. Well, you do sex magic, I do eat magic. Now you see it, now you don't.
RANDY. Is it a magic mouse?
PETERS. It is. It belongs to me and it can make itself appear and disappear. When it smells the cheese, it'll come.
RANDY. Is it your guardian angel?
PETERS *(bluffing).* Er. . . This here little mouse has got me out of more scrapes than you've had hot dinners. More nous in its snout than you have in the whole of your body, small fry.
RANDY. A dog serves me called Satan. He'll eat up the mouse.
PETERS. Oh yeah? *(Finishing)* The mouse is ready to come out.
RANDY. Are you putting all your power in the mouse?
PETERS. I am, little poxer. All my power. *(we see* RANDY *has a hammer behind his back.* PETER *fiddles.)* There she is. Isn't she sweet? Zooe, she's called. Sweet little mouse, even though every minute she pisses in my pocket. (RANDY *smashes the hammer down on the mouse.)*
RANDY. Gotcha!
PETERS. Hey!
RANDY. The power's mine.
GLORIA. Be nice to him, Randy! (RANDY *scoops something into his mouth and rushes off.)* He–didn't eat it. . .? Is the mouse alright?
PETERS *(amazed).* I would have thought it was a bit underdone, myself.
GLORIA. Oh no! He hasn't eaten it alive! Alive!
PETERS. Well. . . He did stun it first. *(Pause)*
GLORIA. How could he! Ugh! I hate mice.
PETERS. I was fond of Zooe.
GLORIA *(disgust).* You kept her in your pocket?
PETERS. Poor Zooe. Mouse torturer! *(He takes his coat off. Very dirty sailor uniform underneath.* GLORIA *looks at the uniform.)*
GLORIA. What's this?
PETERS. I was trying to decide if you'd turn me in.
GLORIA. You're a deserter.

PETERS. I am the only person in the world who must have been stupid enough to jump ship in Venice. I had to swim down about eighty miles of canals.
GLORIA. D'you know where you are?
PETERS. Yeah, Sicily.
GLORIA. This is the Abbey of Thelema!
PETERS. Looks like a piss-poor barn, to me . . .
GLORIA. No! We're famous.
PETERS. No kidding.
GLORIA. Here we are—look - *(newspaper)*
PETERS *(reads).* Black shit and corruption. Orgies! At last! I was right! 'Aleister Crowley the notorious satanist has threatened the Pax Britannica of the Mediterranean by his presence. . . at any moment the British Consulate may well receive reports of enraged Sicilians taking the matter into their hands.' Yeah, they get that trouble in New York.

CROWLEY *enters, rouged mouth, earrings, greased, purple robe, bare arms, head shaven. Slides into a seat near* PETERS.

CROWLEY *(salacious).* Love is the law, love under will. How do you do? Peters, welcome to the Abbey.
PETERS. I've been reading about you.
CROWLEY. It is no substitute for direct experience. Gloria, could you prepare Peter's room?
GLORIA. Which one?
CROWLEY. Nuttall's. I'm afraid he hasn't measured up to the severe standards of selfhood. I'm going to put Peters to the test, since he's here. *(*GLORIA *leaves.)* What brings you here, Peters?
PETERS. A mistake.
CROWLEY. There are no mistakes.
PETERS. Randy's just had my mouse. I hope that was a mistake.
CROWLEY. What we in our ignorance call 'blind chance' are in fact the activities of the Secret Chiefs. I have learnt to submit my will to theirs because they tell me I have a mission. I have been broken so repeatedly in the course of my life that I no longer have a continuous character at all. Very soon I shall become pure Being. Freed from the bonds which tie it to earth the conscious moves through matter like mist through a veil. So, you're a sailor.
PETERS. I was. I jumped ship.
CROWLEY. What date? Can we tell anything from the date. . . ?
PETERS. I dunno. It was spring I guess. I've been walking round. It's been a lot easier recently with the peaches ripe.
CROWLEY. What do you know about magic?
PETERS. The one trick I had has been called out.
CROWLEY. Magic consists of altering the known world by certain rituals and acts, which are connected to the state of affairs in

the astral plane, which interpenetrates everything. Do you follow me?
PETERS. Right.
CROWLEY. Conventional magic is dependent on lengthy preparation, expensive materials, and a lifetime's investigation would not unravel half of what is practised. In 1890 I discovered the left hand way..
PETERS. No kidding.
CROWLEY. The left had way democratises magic because it places in our hands--literally- in our bodies all the power we need. By specific acts of sex magic one can effect changes in the physical world. I want health for my daughter. And life, and love and laughter. Not death, which is indicated for her. In this act, which you have been sent here to accomplish with me, you will go with me to the temple, in order to assure my daughter's safety. *(*PETERS *looks at newspapers.)*
PETERS. Do you really do this with drugs?
CROWLEY. Drugs are used simply to heighten the sense of awareness. The Christian, by alienating himself from the Dionysiac founts in the person, cuts off his nose to spite his face. And who wants to go through life without a nose?
PETERS. Who indeed?
CROWLEY. Who?
PETERS. Who? *(*CROWLEY *and* PETERS *snort cocaine.* PETERS *getting gradually higher.)*
CROWLEY. The no-nose brigade are prevalent, prurient moralists, moral syphilitics. There is a child sick. We must create life force. Prana. A mixture of blood and semen which I was as the father will consume. The semen will be yours. I shall be your woman. You take me anally, and the blood comes from the third finger of the left hand of both of us, a mere pinprick, I assure you.
PETERS. What am I letting myself in for?
CROWLEY. Well, it's no loss to your dignity. If the Secret Chiefs plan to send you away, I imagine you will be on your feet and through the gate in a flash.
PETERS. In the navy we used to do quite a lot of the, er, left hand way, but it was usually with petty officers, to get extra shore leaves.
CROWLEY. I am asking you as one man to another. Save my child.
PETERS. So, they got wind of the kind of things you do, and they're trying to close you down. Is that right?
CROWLEY. Never mind the Abbey. Save the child.
PETERS. I want to get throughout smashed first.
CROWLEY. You've got to be able to concentrate.
PETERS. How old are you?
CROWLEY. What does it matter? I'm fifty.
PETERS. You're exactly twice my age.

CROWLEY. How do you find your way here?
PETERS *(sagacious).* Oh by the moon and stars now less. The Dog Star.
CROWLEY. The eye of Sirius Dog Star. Dog. Satan drawing you on. Red from the sky.
PETERS. No it wasn't Satan, it was the fucking Dog Star. And when I was in Palermo I went into a pet shop to ask directions. They got me some breakfast, and what the hell, I stole this mouse called Zooe. Then your little boy killed it.
CROWLEY. Not my little boy.
PETERS. I reckoned that mouse was looking after me.
CROWLEY. We all have guardians. It's true. My guardian angel is called Aiwass, he dictated Liber Legis to me in Cairo in 1904.
PETERS. Liber Legis? What's that?
CROWLEY. It's a book. I'll tell you about it another time. We must get to work before the sun passes its zenith. *(They stand.)*
PETERS. What do I get for this, anyhow? That kid squashed my mouse, the only true friend I had. And you want me to think of you as a magician?
CROWLEY. Look into my eyes. D'you doubt it? *(*PETERS *looks and quails a little.)*
PETERS. But why'd he kill my mouse? What do I get out of this, anyhow? And who wants it at twelve o'clock? What are we going to do all afternoon?
CROWLEY. Work. *(He leads him off)* Work, work, and more work.

NUTTALL, *alone, ruminative.*
URFF *comes in.*

URFF *(to* NUTTALL*).* There are no limits to pain, to agony. I cannot find the means to let go of my self and become universal. Suffering is as great as the universe, which is infinite. Nuttall, I am on the dark side of the moon. There are no limits to what can happen here. I cannot abandon my self-respect or my miserable humanity. The Cabala predicts an endless sequence of numbers in response to my questions about suffering. They stretch without a break to the horizon. When shall I make a compact with the night, and the man who is my oppressor?
NUTTALL *(knowing).* The Beast.
URFF. Did I choose him, or did he choose me?
NUTTALL. You are the worm, he is the Beast. That is all we know, and all we need to know. I have not been here long enough to discover my will. But it's coming.
URFF. But even he suffers. He is in agony from addiction, and his child's dying. If I'm struggling to get into his position, what will I know any different when I'm there?
NUTTALL. I don't understand it, either. The devil suffers. What

does God do about it? He doesn't put him out of his misery. *(*LARIA *enters with bundle, nursing it.)*
NUTTALL. Is there anything the matter, Laria?
LARIA. Binky's dead.
URFF *(pious).* Blessed relief from suffering. . .
LARIA *(flatly).* Binky's dead.
NUTTALL. What, just now? *(Pause)* Oh, that's . . . tragic. That's . . . unfortunate, (GLORIA *enters.)*
GLORIA. What's up?
NUTTALL. Binky's dead. *(*GLORIA *goes and suddenly puts her arms around* LARIA.*)*
GLORIA. I'm sorry. I'm ever so sorry. (LARIA *starts to cry and* GLORIA *comforts her.)*
NUTTALL. Shouldn't someone fetch the Beast? He won't like being interrupted, but there's not much point now, in that magical operation, unless he's trying to bring the dead back to life.

NORA HENESSEY *enters, blithely oblivious. She flops down at the table, carrying a wilting bunch of wild flowers.* RANDY *follows her in and stops a short distance away. He is carrying the pickaxe. He glowers at* NORA.

NORA. You've been digging, Randy. Well done! What have you been digging?
URFF *(to* NUTTALL). He shouldn't do that, you know. The dead should rest in peace.
NORA. I had this idea, that one could subsist solely on the visions which the Mediterranean vista provides. I would have loved to have been one of the first anchorites and stared over a deserted sea. *(Pause)* It's so hot, though! Randy, would you get some water for my flowers? Let's hope it's not too late. *(*RANDY *exits and* NORA *inspects the table. She examines the nut cutlets and finds some letters addressed to her. Pleased)* For me. *(She begins opening them)* And someone's had a nibble of my little offering, I see. Was that you, Urff?
URFF *(torn between clearing his name and breaking Coventry).* Er, no.
NUTTALL *(to* URFF*).* Sshh!
NORA. I'll get you all to talk, yet. *(*RANDY *comes in with water.)* Little Randy responds to kindness, don't you? Thank you, darling.

RANDY *takes up the pickaxe and moves to see what* LARIA *is holding. He peers over* GLORIA'S *shoulder.*

GLORIA *(fierce, low).* Go away.
NORA. And he had the good sense to talk to me when no one was about. And yet, it's a tragedy in the making that he doesn't know his ABC's. *(Staring at* GLORIA'S *back)* And we all know at

whose feet to lay that particular tragedy. *(*NORA *reading the letter.)*

NUTALL. Wasn't it the Beast who said Randy needn't learn to read?

URFF. That's right.

NUTTALL. It's nothing to do with Gloria, then. Any more than the rest of us. We're meant to be a commune, so we're all collectively responsible. I personally think he should learn to read.

URFF. Then why did the Beast get his way? *(Pause.)*

NORA *looks up from her letter.*

NORA *(announcement).* I'm sorry to say, everybody, that my mother has been taken rather ill. In fact, she's very poorly. This means I shall be obliged to go home, with all speed. There's another letter here, but it's not addressed to anybody. *(*NUTTALL *takes the proffered envelope. Turns it over* URFF *examining it closely.)* Yes. I didn't think mother would last out the year, somehow. I had a premonition.

NORA *exits.*

URFF *and* NUTTALL *are wrapped up in the problem of the letter with no name on it.*

URFF. Things happen in threes. . . *(*NUTTALL *decides to cut the Gordian knot.)* Shouldn't the Beast?

NUTTALL *(opening the letter).* It doesn't matter who opens it. The bad news is going to be the same, if it is bad news. . . *(They study an official looking document which has come in the letter.)* It's in Italian. *(Gives it to* URFF*)* You're the linguist. *(*URFF *doesn't want the job of reading the letter.)*

URFF. Only Hebrew and Greek.

NUTTALL. Come on. Italian's only Latin. *(*URFF *reads.)*

URFF. It's from the police. It's a deportation order.

NUTTALL. Oh, god. Why?

URFF. It doesn't say.

NUTTALL. I suppose we'll have to go. Gloria, they're chucking us out.

GLORIA. What? *(She gets up from* LARIA'S *side and looks at the letter in* URFF'S *hand.)* The fascist bastards.

NUTTALL *(proud).* My father has **always** mistrusted Mussolini. He told me when I said I was going to Italy. He said, 'That man's crazy.' Fascists. . . You can't expect them to behave like civilised human beings now *(*CROWLEY *enters as before in drag. But he knows there's something wrong.)* There's bad news, I'm afraid. Binky's dead.

CROWLEY. I know. *(Pause)*

NUTTALL *(surprised).* Did you? *(*PETERS *enters looking sheepish)*

URFF *(sure of himself).* Peters couldn't get it up, is that right?

CROWLEY. I'm sorry, Laria. Fate was stronger than desire.

NUTTALL. What's he talking about?

URFF. The magical act with Peters to save Binky's life. Peters couldn't get it up.

NUTTALL. Oh, I see. . .

PETERS *(ingratiating).* Sorry.

CROWLEY *(to* LARIA*).* We were checkmate by the secret chiefs. They wanted her. Don't cry.

LARIA *begins to cry and sob.* CROWLEY *behind her, his hand on her shoulder.*

NORA HENESSEY *re-enters, with a suitcase.*

NORA. I've had my things packed now for a number of days, but I always thought that what sent me away would come from within the group. Mr Crowley, I am leaving. My mother is not well. One should look after one's family. I am leaving.

CROWLEY. Good. *(No one will look at her.)*

NORA *(desperate).* Goodbye. *(Pause)* Anyway, I'm glad. I'm not sure I want to stay around in this pigsty to see your daughter die for lack of proper medical attention, while you caper around like the Queen of Sheba.

NUTTALL. Binky is dead. *(Points to* LARIA*)*

NORA. Well, then, that only proves my point.

CROWLEY. Get out.

NORA. I didn't mean that. I'm sorry, that was harsh. But it's no harsher than the punishment you decided to give me. *(Pause)* Mr. Crowley, you owe me a hundred pounds.

CROWLEY. Peters, would you take this woman's bags to the village?

PETERS *(overeager).* Yes, Sir! *(He bustles up and takes them officiously and stands next to* NORA, *smiling brightly.)*

PETERS. Ready to go, Ma'am?

NORA *(cold).* Who are you?

PETERS. I'm just a nobody.

NORA. Come alone then. *(They exit slowly.)*

LARIA *(to* CROWLEY*).* Why are they throwing us out?

CROWLEY *(softly).* It is written, it is the destiny of Alastor, the Wanderer of the Waste. . .

URFF. You were right, you know, about Peters being an incarnation.

NUTTALL *(to* URFF*).* How d'you know he was an incarnation?

URFF. He said as much to Nora. He said, 'I am Nobody.'

NUTTALL. I see. If he wasn't anybody, then who was he?

URFF. Precisely!

NUTTALL. I wonder if he's still visible, then. He might have

evaporated, when he left.

He exits, curious to see. URFF *strikes a casual, knowing pose, as if he was above chasing phantoms and turns and watches* CROWLEY *and* LARIA.
GLORIA, *sensitive to the mood of the moment, leaves* LARIA *and exits.*

URFF. Poor Binky. Makes you wish there was a heaven, doesn't it.
LARIA. I want to die. *(Insistent)* I want to die.
URFF. Yes, yes.

Although excluded, URFF *nods sympathetically and walks off slowly.* CROWLEY *and* LARIA *oblivious.*
The last member of the group is RANDY. *He stares at the backs of* CROWLEY *and* LARIA *darkly.*

CROWLEY. We shall make new life from the ruins of the old. *(Becomes aware of* RANDY.*)* What is it, Randy? *(*RANDY *holds out the pickaxe. He wants to help bury the baby.)*
LARIA *(losing control).* Go away, you little monster! Go away!

RANDY *exits, dropping the pickaxe, hurried, frightened by* LARIA'S *screaming at him.*
LARIA *subsides, hugging the bundle and weeping.*

CROWLEY. It's simple. We have to make better fortune for ourselves. Put the child down.

CROWLEY *is making strong and clear sexual advances to* LARIA, *very much the boss in the situation. But he can't make her let go of the bundle with* BINKY *inside.*

CROWLEY. Come. We have work to do.

He pins her on the table. The lights are dying fast. Music, sudden, loud, conclusive.
LARIA *screams one scream to the blackout: rage, surrender, grief, sorrow, a great scream.* CROWLEY *keeps pushing. She still holds* BINKY.

CROWLEY. *(of the scream).* That's better.

Blackout.

ACT TWO

Set suggests ballroom or decaying dining-room of a once grand hotel, with huge, shabby dim mirrors. Assorted tables, white cloths covering some of them, but overall a great deal of open space.
CROWLEY *is seated at one of the tables. He has a kilt or tartan trousers and a glengarry cap on, and a large dark coat.*
LARIA *enters dusting off a large elderly menu.*
She is dressed in a flame red (or what you will) costume and heavily made up as the scarlet woman. The time is a few weeks after Act One concluded and the place is the Hotel Christol in Boulogne.
LARIA *sits down with* CROWLEY *who takes the menu.*

LARIA. The last boat leaves Boulogne for England in four hours.
CROWLEY. There's time for supper if they'd only serve us.
LARIA. We've only got enough money for the boat.
CROWLEY. That gendarme who's been prowling around told me to stay in here or I'd get arrested.
LARIA. I've just been talking to him. He thinks you're Gerard Lee Bevan the bank robber.

CROWLEY *tries to attract the attention of a Maitre D', who crosses the stage without looking at either of them. He fails.*

CROWLEY. If they'd only give us some supper, I wouldn't grudge them their little game.
LARIA. I think I could get us out of here, if I could just get him on his own. But she doesn't like him talking to me.

DIDEROT, *the police commissioner, crosses the stage and* LARIA *smiles and waves at him. He smiles smarmily back and approaches.*
DIDEROT *stands behind* CROWLEY *who pretends that the policeman is in fact a waiter.*
DIDEROT *gets out their passports.*

CROWLEY. Well, which wine would you recommend?
DIDEROT. Name, please.
CROWLEY. Aleister Crowley.
DIDEROT. Madame?

LARIA. Maine, Laria Maine. M-A-I-N-E. Got it?
DIDEROT *(interested).* So you are not married?
CROWLEY. No. We're not married. And I want my dinner.
DIDEROT. I would like you to come separately and identify your belongings.
LARIA. Are we clean?
CROWLEY. Absolutely. I finished everything.
DIDEROT. It's a very small matter. I need to talk to Madame. *(*DIDEROT *smirks.)*
LARIA. I'm not. . . *(To* CROWLEY*)* I can't. Not with him. He's just too repulsive. *(*DIDEROT *tugs at* LARIA'S *sleeve and she reluctantly goes, hurried off by him.)*
DIDEROT. Come. Come.

The exquisitely dressed MAITRE D' *comes in and places two glasses at* CROWLEY'S *table, filling one with brandy. Then, he stands by.* MADAME POITIER *enters. Handsome, coiffed, Haute Bourgeoise, fifties. She begins immediately.*

MME POITIER. We owe you an apology, Mr Crowley. *(She speaks English without an accent)* I'm afraid my English is rusty—I spent some time in England, but that was many years ago. However, everyone has heard of the famous Mr Aleister Crowley. So while the police are filling out their reports—it will be a pleasure to provide you with supper free of charge.
CROWLEY. I'll have roast beef and '93 Hautbrion. *(She takes the menu and gives it to the* MAITRE D', *who exits.)*
MME POITIER. Again, I apologize. The menu you were given is out of date. There is only one menu tonight. I did not realize that you were the Aleister Crowley, but one of our older lady residents recognized you when you came in.
CROWLEY. Who's this woman? I didn't see anyone.
MME POITIER. Oh, she's a rich old widow who occupies the top floor.
CROWLEY. Is she interested in the occult?
MME POITIER. She is. She said you used to be a mountaineer.
CROWLEY. Yes. Extremely. . . rich?
MME POITIER. Oh, yes.
CROWLEY. Would you ask her to take supper with me?
MME POITIER. Certainly. She said something strange. She said that there had been an accident once when you were climbing, and you had saved yourself by walking away. Others hadn't been so lucky. I'm sorry we don't have the right menu. We'll recover, but we went downhill after the war.
CROWLEY. You weren't the manager here before. How long have you been the manager?
MME POITIER. Since the patron died. He was a lovely man. We had a wonderful marriage. Marriage is a serious business for us

bourgeoises. I'm as married again now, but it's not the same. . . You're such an unusual man. Tell me, were your parents married?
CROWLEY. Yes indeed. To each other.
MME POITIER. And do you take after your father?
CROWLEY. No. He was a preacher, a fundamentalist. He believed that the world was created in 4004 BC by God, who popped fossils in the rocks in order to tempt the faithful to unbelief.
MME POITIER. And you're not like that at all, is that what you are saying?
CROWLEY. I'm the Logos of the Aeon. The new era started in 1904. Now, by force of my will, come unafraid, out of the yawning cavities, the creatures of the night. The only sin is restriction. *(*MME POITIER *pours* CROWLEY *some brandy.)*
MME POITIER. So, you are a prophet and a mountaineer and an anti-marriageist. How intriguing.
CROWLEY. And a poet.
MME POITIER. But that is wonderful!
CROWLEY. Yes, but the old labels won't do any more.
MME POITIER. So how would you describe yourself in the new way?
CROWLEY. As a Magus, that is to say the incarnation and culmination of ten thousand years of magical tradition reaching back to the Babylonians through countless figures like Newton and Paracelsus. But my face to the modern age is that of a psychologist.
MME POITIER. A psychologist! Yes, that is modern!
CROWLEY. People oppose me now, but in my own day I shall be believed, and remorse will disappear.
MME POITIER. When did you discover that you were different?
CROWLEY. When I discovered sex. I was twelve. I fucked one of the servants. She got the sack and I got enlightenment.
MME POITIER. And what happened to her?
CROWLEY. She went to London and turned herself into a whore, I expect. Hardly a great change. Most of them did, the worthless ones who were dismissed without references. . . She was called Ann Chapman.
MME POITIER. Ann Chapman. . . I was trained at the Savoy, that's where I learned my English, it was exactly the same time, thirty-five years ago. I lived in London in the most abject poverty terrifying! One of Jack the Ripper's murders was committed just around the corner. I lay in the bedbugs and dreamed of being a great hotelier.
CROWELY. Well, what are you now?
MME POITIER *(suave).* A great hotelier. You should meet this woman You might get something from her.
CROWLEY. . . . Is she. . . very rich?

MME POITIER. She's very impatient to meet you, the Great Magician. *(Pause.)*

CROWLEY. Let her wait. You were in London then. Did you understand the Jack the Ripper murders?

MME POITIER. Some mindless animal with bloodlust. . .

CROWLEY. No. It was a magical operation. To obtain supreme power.

MME POITIER. With ordinary whores, picked at random?

CROWLEY. There's nothing wrong with the ordinariness of whores—that's precisely why they were chosen—and each murder makes power: their bodies formed a calvary cross of seven points, stretching across London facing the west. The point is after the fourth killing, the police reached the woman as she was still literally screaming her guts out in a cul de sac. There was no possible escape—but the magician has acquired the power of invisibility. He has literally disappeared. The fourth killing confers the power of invisibility. Then the kills grow more frequent, because he has nothing to fear. (CROWLEY *has drawn a Calvary cross in the dust on a table top.)*

POITIER. He. . . ?

CROWLEY. After the seventh, the magician stops, because his task has been accomplished. The calvary cross is complete.

MME POITIER. There was a theory that he was an ex-officer.

CROWLEY. Yes. He went around in evening wear, so that after he had dined off the more succulent portions of the ladies, he turns up his collar—and not a trace remains to be seen.

POITIER. Are you sure it wasn't you who did it?

CROWLEY. No, it wasn't me. My mission is to abolish the difference between the dark and the light. That's my vocation.

MME POITIER. You think that Jack the Ripper would be a stronger magician than you?

CROWLEY. Quite possibly. Either you have knowledge, or you have power. In recent years, I have concentrated on knowledge. I used to blast other magicians. I blasted McGregor Mathers once.

MME POITIER. You killed him?

CROWLEY. I blasted him. He had led the Order of the Golden Dawn disastrously astray. I had to do it, to save the Order.

MME POITIER. But—how many people have you actually killed intentionally?

CROWLEY. I'm afraid that I have no idea of what you mean by intention. Everything I do, I do with my whole being. My

conscious and unconscious are integrated.

MME POITIER. These four men who fell off your rope in the Himalayas, were you responsible? *(Pause.)* And we have all followed your amusing adventures at Cefalu where I understand you were expelled after you were discovered eating a baby. *(*CROWLEY *laughs.)* Your baby. *(*CROWLEY *is pleased.)*

CROWLEY. It's very flattering to have other people's wish-fulfilments projected onto me, but I can't live up to that one. The child was ill. She died. That was all. We buried her.

MME POITIER. Why couldn't you save her?

CROWLEY. I tried everything. But then again, there's probably a little bit of me that wanted her to die.

MME POITIER. You had a death-wish for your daughter?

CROWLEY. Obviously. How else could she die?

MME POITIER. So if I could summarize, you claim to be a supreme magus and to have abolished the differences between the dark and the light, yin and yang, consciousness and unconsciousness. This puts you in a position of unique responsibility with regard to those around you, because if they die, you can be said to have willed it.

CROWLEY. Yes. Again, if there are shortcomings in my example, this does not mean that the Law is affected. The Law of Do What Thou Wilt.

MME POITIER. Let us suppose that say, Jack the Ripper had a complete idea of what he was doing, and took full responsibility. If he was doing it for a purpose, would he be a greater magician than you?

CROWLEY. Seven of hearts always outbids five of hearts. But then, there is always the element of strategy. Magic is like anything else. It's never quite a straight fight. *(Stands up.)* I've enjoyed talking to you. But I must go to work, if we're going to catch the last boat.

MME POITIER. No, wait, please! When did the new era start?

CROWLEY. 1904. My guardian angel Aiwass dictated the Book of the Law to me then. This is very good brandy.

MME POITIER. Yes. It comes from the Marne. '88 was a bad year for the champagne but a good year for brandy.

CROWLEY. The year of the Ripper.

MME POITIER. Has London changed?

CROWLEY. It gets bigger, I hear. . .

MME POITIER *(waving brandy glass).* Isn't it amazing that some of the Ripper's victims must have died as these sour little grapes were being picked? I am very curious about a possible connection between you and Jack the Ripper. The servant who was dismissed after you had to do with her. . .

CROWLEY. Ann Chapman.

MME. POITIER. A woman of the same name was killed just around the corner from me, when I was in London, eighth of September, 1888.

CROWLEY. It's plausible to imagine her working as a whore two years after her dismissal. I remember my mother refused to give her a reference, point-blank.

MME POITIER. But the Ripper murders aren't sex magic, are they, even though there might be a connection to you through Miss Chapman?

CROWLEY. The Ripper murders would be using a completely different system of objectification. They would be what used to be called 'black' magic.

MME POITIER. Until you came along, with a new kind.

CROWLEY. Not even new. I synthesized a number of sources of esoteric knowledge to prepare for their disclosure in the century of the common man.

MME POITIER. Will you teach me about sex magic?

CROWLEY. It's what I will do with this old bag upstairs to get her money.

MME POITIER. Oh, surely it's more than being a gigolo.

CROWLEY. It's for the creation of anything you want.

MME POITIER. So—sex magic stands in the same relationship to conventional magic as fundamentalism to the Catholic Church?

CROWLEY. Precisely, direct access.

MME POITIER. I thought magic was to do with consecrated talismans and the right objects, tongue of newt and so forth.

CROWLEY. It does, but sex magic considerably simplifies the process. The magician has a magical helper, a man or a woman and in this way, the magical current is produced. Disciplined will is important. Then there's the operation of the eighth degree, a solitary sex magical operation which if successful will produce the scarlet woman as your constant and visible companion.

MME POITIER. In other words, you bring yourself off, and you imagine.

CROWLEY. Yes. *(*MME POITIER *laughs.)*

MME POITIER. Mr Crowley, I am not a policeman, but... You killed someone on purpose, haven't you?

CROWLEY. He asked me to.

MME POITIER. Who was he?

CROWLEY. I can't disclose his name.

MME POITIER. I'll tell you the names of seven people I killed, if you'll teach me about sex magic.

CROWLEY *(impressed).* Seven?

MME POITIER. Martha Turner, Mary Ann Nichols, Annie Chapman, Elisabeth Stride, Katherine Eddison, the unrecorded murder of Ruth Potter, and on the ninth of November, long after the grape harvest finished, Marie Genette Kelly.

CROWLEY. You!

MME POITIER *(dimpling).* Enchantée... It was a triumph of instinct. The first one was almost an accident, then in reading up this unusual behaviour I found the means to power in my grasp. At any rate, it seems to have worked...

CROWLEY. What did you do? How did you use the supreme magical power?

MME POITIER. I knew I would end up like the whores if I didn't do something about my life.

CROWLEY. What did you do?

MME POITIER *(secret smile).* Made myself a great hotelier.

CROWLEY. What!

MME POITIER. Many people have done far worse things than murder seven whores to get where they are. And I'm glad to say, this hotel is better than many of its kind. I'm not boasting. But, you will know much more about sex magic than me.

CROWLEY. You must be able to do conjurations.

MME POITIER. Pardon?

CROWLEY. Conjurations. You know, like Faustus conjuring up Helen of Troy.

MME POITIER. You must forgive me my ignorance, but I started rather low down in the scullery and I haven't had time to catch up. Who is this Helen of Troy?

CROWLEY. It doesn't matter. He conjures her up, just to give the students a look, at this famous beautiful queen.

MME POITIER. Is that wrong?

CROWLEY. No! It just doesn't go far enough. He should have fucked her. Used her as his scarlet woman. It produces enormous magical power. The manifestation of Helen of Troy becomes your scarlet woman. You'd be quite impregnable, magically, if you could keep her around.

MME POITIER. Laria is your manifestation?

CROWLEY. Laria, unfortunately, is merely human. When I was in New York I used to strive frequently on my own for a scarlet woman, but only get shadowy arms or legs. Once, a whole yoni materialized briefly.

MME POITIER. Yoni?

CROWLEY. Er—vagina.

MME POITIER. Whose was it?

CROWLEY. Nobody's. It was unattached.

POITIER *(laughs politely).* I am so stupid. I didn't know any of this.

CROWLEY. You can make manifestations?

MME POITIER. Oh yes, but I never thought to try sex magic with them.

CROWLEY. How many people can you do?

MME POITIER. How many would you like?

CROWLEY. Amazing!
MME POITIER. Tell me some more about sex magic.
CROWLEY. No! You tell me. What do you do with your power?
MME POITIER. Well, some people go to the Costa Brava for their holidays, every year after we close for the winter; I rebuild London in 1888 and pass into my own creation and murder seven whores.
CRAWLEY. So you conjure a whole city?
MME. POITIER. Pas de problème . . .
CROWLEY. Well, you'll hardly need any help form me
MME POITIER. I do! Teach me about sex magic.
CROWLEY. What do I get?
MME POITIER. Anything you want.
CROWLEY. London in 1895.
MME POITIER. It will be a pleasure. Whereabouts?
CROWLEY. The Fullham Road. The moment when I chucked Willie Yeats out of the Order of the Golden Dawn's Temple for fraud. *(The lights go down.)*
MME POITIER. William Butler Yeats?
CROWLEY. Yes. He wasn't an adept, just playing around with elementals and automatic writing. A bad poet, and bog Irish. In the Fulham Road.
MME POITIER. Oh, I can find him easily. He's not there. You misremember.
CROWLEY. Is he somewhere else?
MME POITIER. He's saying goodbye to his girlfriend at the railway station–Victoria Station. Look!

Lights vertically on MAUD GONNE *and* YEATS. MAUD, *a tall girl with fair reddish hair, long dress surrounded by bird cages, bonnet.* YEATS, *long cloak, baggy trousers, sombrero. The noise and babble of a railway station surround them, but amplified, distorted, as if twisted by the effort of recall. Nevertheless, it is a magical effect.*
CROWLEY *laughs and claps his hands.*

MME POITIER. Not bad, eh? What's the girl?
CROWLEY. Maud Gonne. Fenian. She's English like so many Irish revolutionaries. *(The noise level reduces.)*
GONNE *(oblivious).* No, Willie, I will not go with you to the Temple. It is no more than self deluding freemasonry which is the mainstay of the British Empire, to spend your time mumbling round a table with the English in a 'secret' society everyone knows about. You should be where societies have to be secret to survive; you should be in Dublin making bombs.
YEATS. I am a poet, not a plainclothes sapper. I must ask you

only to consider carefully what you would do. In the present situation, the murder of Englishmen accomplishes nothing more than a boast of bloody lawlessness for half an hour. But I swear to you that if you withdraw from this I will write great Irish national poetry.
CROWLEY. I know she's your manifestation, but. . . could I try something with the girl?
MME POITIER. Of course. *(*CROWLEY *tries to undress* MAUD GONNE *from the back. But every time he tries it, there is an electrical crackle, and he recoils, shocked.* MAUD *in tableau.)* What are you doing? I'm not surprised she treats you like that. You didn't introduce yourself.
CROWLEY. The disciplined will of the magician breaks through to another time. . .
MME POITIER. Your rhythms are wrong. Wait a little, then join in the conversation as if you had just passed by. *(*MME POITIER *indicates a point on the floor inside which the manifestation is taking place.)* Step close. Be still and they will shortly be able to see you. Before, you were no more than the breeze. *(*CROWLEY *steps in and waits.)* That's right. *(*CROWLEY *is finding it difficult.)*
YEATS. I am just as sensible of the need for heroes as you.
GONNE. But not of the need to stand up and be counted. When I talk with you of Ireland, I feel quite alone.
YEATS. I hang on your every word. I would die for a look, a kiss–
GONNE. If you really had a tendancy to excess, you might be a better poet.
CROWLEY. Quite right.
GONNE. You exclaim with delight for hours over Blake's theories of London districts allocated to the human faculties, but you do not think for a blind second of the bloody feet of the British Empire planted in Dublin.
YEATS. Take care. Be reasonable.
GONNE. That is enough, Willie. I must go. The train is already late. *(She exits quickly.)*
CROWLEY. Bring her on again.
MME POITER. Too late! She's caught the train!

Noises of train starting, enormous, strange, fades rapidly.
CROWLEY *stands and confronts* YEATS.

CROWLEY. Hello, Willie. *(Slowly)*
YEATS *(even).* Crowley. *(He peers)* You look older, somehow.
CROWLEY. Read my poems? *(To* MME POITIER*)* The fraudulent windbag.
YEATS. I have. I do not carry them with me, but I have.
CROWLEY *(to* MME POITIER). He's boiling with envy. *(To* YEATS)

And what d'you think of them, eh? My poems. . . *(Pause)*

YEATS. There are two lines of poetry. *(Pause)* In a porter barrel of inconsequential verse. *(Turns)*

CROWLEY *kicks his arse so he falls over.*

YEATS *stands and turns again with a slow dignity.*

YEATS *(stately vituperation).* You brass necked hooligan. You are a stranger to any disciplined application of talent, should you possess it, which I doubt. *(He turns and* CROWLEY *kicks him again. He picks himself up.)* Your talent, I now perceive, is as accidental as the shape of my snot; might I suggest you join a circus *(He disappears. Lights to normal. Sound effects go.)*

MME POITIER *(false sympathy).* What a cheek that man has! I did not realize you were a poet as well, and I was summoning a professional rival. *(She gives him brandy.)*

CROWLEY. It doesn't matter. We ought to consummate now.

MME POITIER. Oh, but my dear Mr Crowley, I am not exactly in the first flush of youth. . . just tell me about it.

CROWLEY. Why?

MME POITIER. I'm not sexually active, you understand. You would have me at a disadvantage with your little games. *(*CROWLEY *shrugs)* You see, from what you've said, I would think that you used unstable women as your battering ram to the astral plane. You use them up. People round you kill each other and go mad. I find your energy intimidating. I think you would need to crush, to dominate me. You use women. Without them, you'd be nothing.

CROWLEY. It's not true. Frequently I perform acts with men. I abase myself and make myself up to play the woman.

MME POITIER. Same problem. That's just a typical saxon bully's sentimental whoredom. How would you react to someone whom you found to be genuinely superior?

CROWLEY. You! Superior! You have power, yes. But no real knowledge.

MME POITIER. Yes. . . I am amazed than an Ipsissimus should be so thrown by a few anecdotes as it were, on the astral plane. You should know our relative positions. I am above you.

CROWLEY. . . . No, you're not!

MME POITIER. Do you now have any power at all? There's nothing wrong with your wand, is there?

CROWLEY. What?

MME POITIER. There's nothing the trouble with your wand. You haven't had trouble getting an erection?

CROWLEY. No. The one problem I do have is my orgasm is holding back.

MME POITIER. What have you been doing about this?

CROWLEY. Opium, ether, laudanum, cocaine, heroin, the occasional flask of wine. I can tolerate opium very well. I have a great deal in common with the Chinese. It's heroin which is the bad boy. It makes me go deaf.

MME POITIER. Why don't you retire to a job? It doesn't hurt.

CROWELY *(softly).* It is written, it is the destiny of Alastor, the Wanderer of the Waste. . .

LARIA *comes in. She is dressed in* DIDEROT'S *clothes. She is stoned. She goes behind* CROWLEY.

MME POITIER. I like your friend. The scarlet woman.

CROWLEY. Laria? Oh, yes.

MME POITIER. Couldn't you do it with her, and I could watch?

CROWLEY. I doubt if you'd see anything unusual.

MME POITIER. I might. If there is this campaign against you in the press, why are you both going back to England? If you're broke and you've failed, they'll only pour more abuse on your heads. Are you gluttons for punishment? *(*DIDEROT *enters minus his uniform, clad only in a white towel. He is stern-faced.)*

CROWLEY. I didn't know we were going back. I thought we were still under arrest.

LARIA *finds* DIDEROT'S *gun and gets it out of the holster and points it at* DIDEROT *who shrugs and raises his hands perfunctorily.*

LARIA. Not any more. Beast, let's get out of here!

CROWLEY. Not yet. We have unfinished business. How did all this start? *(Cool)*

LARIA. He wanted me to beat him with me wearing his uniform.

MME POITIER. Is that sex magic?

LARIA. Not unless you feel strongly about policemen. It's the price of freedom.

MME POITIER. And you would do it?

LARIA. Do it? I should have got the gun out and killed him! Bastard!

CROWLEY *(mildly).* Do what thou wilt shall be all the law. *(*LARIA *sings snatches from 'Ten Cents a Dance',)*

LARIA. Ten cents a dance, that's what they pay me, gosh how they weigh me down.

MME. POITIER. Tell me about Laria.

CROWLEY. She's a whore, a scarlet whore, a woman in a million. I'd be lost without her.

MME POITIER. And you had a child?

CROWLEY. Yes, we did. Once.

MME POITIER. She looks tired. Why don't you come and sit down for a bit, Laria?

LARIA. D'you mind if I interrupt the great work for a few minutes?

MME POITIER. Oh! We're not . . . going that way.

LARIA. That's what they all say. Isn't it? *(Gun in* CROWLEY'S *ear)* but one little sniff at beauty boy here, and religion, law, marriage come tumbling down. He loves to see it tumbling down. We're catalysts. People realize their true nature through us, and that sets them free. Free hotels, free policemen, lust and love both exist, both are separate, both are free. Aren't they, old Prick?

CROWLEY. What?

LARIA. **Lust and love and hate and everything else exist but it's all free.**

CROWLEY. Oh. Yes. *(*LARIA *pokes the gun at* CROWLEY, *who tries not to react.)*

LARIA. I could have saved myself a whole lot of trouble. I could have filled Old Prick here full of holes. I didn't think of that. *(Sticks her face in* CROWLEY'S *and puts the gun to his head.)* Remember my face. . . Remember my face. . . It's the last thing you're going to see. *(To* MME POITIER*)* Old Prick has a rather rudimentary grasp of people's faces. That's why when he fucks somebody else he can still think it's me.

MME POITIER. What is it exactly that you do together that is so special?

LARIA. He does all the work. I just lie there with my legs open. *(Taunting* CROWLEY*)* The work involves cleansing of the sexual wound. *(Arch.)* But when he took the wrapping off to clean it, poor Beast was mistaken for one of the maggots.

CROWLEY. Don't be stupid. *(*LARIA *puts gun in* CROWLEY'S *face again.)*

LARIA. And we exterminate maggots, especially when they appear disguised as bald apes with hardons. Yes, you. *(Sings)* 'Ten cents a dance, that's what they pay me, Gosh how they weigh me down. Ten cents a dance, pansies and rough guys, Touch guys who tear my gown. . .' *(She sprawls amiably in a chair. She holds out her hand and watches it minutely.)* I'm starting to fade. The Scarlet woman is starting to fade . . . what colour will she go? I need a little snort to bring the colour back into my cheeks. *(Turns to the other two)* And what have you two done this evening? Kept the black dog off your back, have you? *(To* CROWLEY*)* Had any good sex magic lately?

CROWLEY. Madame Poitier is interested in . . . the occult.

LARIA *(sings).* Tinkers and tailors and one-legged sailors can pay for a ticket and rent me. . . Butchers and bakers, and rats from the harbours. . .

CROWLEY. She has considerable experience, but none at all

when it comes to the left hand way.

LARIA. Oh yeah?

CROWLEY. She wants to learn about sex magic, Laria.

LARIA *(mimic).* 'She wants to learn about sex magic, Laria.' Well . . . darling, it's like this. If you want something, you use your whole personality, your whole sexuality, to bring about its creation. It's as easy as falling off a log. and it should catch on like wild fire. I am to perform an act of sex magic with the repulsive Mr Diderot, in order to secure our freedom. Sex magic has nothing to do with normal attraction; in fact the more prejudices you overcome, the better the outcome will be. Health, Strength, Freedom. . . I am going to diddle Diderot for our freedom, freedom, freedom! Otherwise, we may be cast into the innermost dungeons with little pink-eyed ratssss. . . If you like, you can watch.

MME POITIER. Thank you. I've been trying to get Mr Crowley to show me all evening. How long have you been practising?

LARIA. Oh, years . . . you may think that you see a pair of emotionally and financially bankrupt junkies, vilified beyond their wildest dreams in the press–but no! We're on the road to freedom. Even if we weren't, the law is not affected. So What Thou Wilt shall be the whole of the Law. *(The phone rings.)* It's for you. *(*MME POITIER *picks it up.)* I am above the world, watching, time and space . . . are irritations . . . continuity? . . . pooh . . . the power is given to us by the secret chiefs . . . from sex magic.

MME POITIER *(simultaneously).* Ah bon . . . ah bon . . . je lui dirai . . . merci, Madame. *(Phone down. To* CROWLEY*)* She will see you now.

CROWLEY. Who?

MME POITIER. The woman upstairs.

CROWLEY *(to* MME POITIER*).* Do you think I could have something to raise the ecstatic current?

MME POITIER. But you've already had almost a bottle of brandy.

CROWLEY. I am not really affected by alcohol, but if there were some ether . . . you can see very deeply into things . . . sometimes so deeply you can't even make connections . . . if I had some ether. . .

MME POITIER. But you can't go and see her drugged.

CROWLEY. Why not?

MME POITIER. She won't see you!

CROWLEY. How do you know!

MME POITIER. I couldn't allow it in my hotel. Suppose something happened?

CROWLEY. The whole idea is to get something to happen.

MME POITIER. Yes, but what? I retired from magic before your scientific breakthrough, but I seem to be in better condition for

practising it than you. I can do it alone. What would you be if I took your Scarlet Woman away?

CROWLEY. You! You're just a stack of invoices. There are a million fakers like you. A few card tricks up your sleeve and you think you're a secret chief. The one definite test of a magus is that they are held without honour in their own country, and that test I fulfill.

MME POITIER. I would pass that test for a magus. No one here knows my other status.

CROWLEY *(coldly).* So what do you want to know?

MME POITIER. Can you do anything, or is it all a tall story?

CROWLEY. It's got to be a tall story, really, hasn't it? Like the Ripper being an adept is a tall story. Could you bring the heroin? I have to get to work. *(*POITIER *is about to phone, but then stops.)*

MME. POITIER. I'd heard so much about you. I was so pleased when you came. I thought, here is one man in the whole world who would understand me. And you don't understand me, and you don't understand history either. If you don't understand what makes people tick, what's the point of trying to start a religion?

CROWLEY. Of course I understand you. I feel as if at Cefalu I've been trying to run a second rate resort for the last year. In the end, there is really very little difference between us.

MME. POITIER. You are a fraud. You let lies about yourself blow about the world. You do not act from your centre. You have no centre. You have no heart. I do. I also serve. I am of convenience and help to weary travellers. The first act of life is an act of violence, and we spend the rest of our time on earth making up for it.

When I killed, it was with eyes averted. I have always been prudish, I can tell you. As for the consumption of pudenda, I was sick. But you nothing revolts, nothing distresses. You are a monster who preys on the weak or is preyed upon without scruple, without regret, a lover of power and unmasked violence, the sneer on the face of the dinosaur, a pathetic and dangerous desire to shock, but finally a fraud, a drug fiend, a would-be magician who has forgotten the invocations and relies on impressing his supporters with his sexual prowess.

Sooner or later, Crowley, it all comes home to roost. Sooner or later, we all discover who we are. You have been so negligent of your personality that you stand no more chance of integrity than a man with asthma trying to blow up a burst paper bag. Civilisation is infinitely more dangerous than anything that you have indulged in.

You do not wish to understand the great struggles that tear us apart. You wish only to discard in favour of your shabby Egyptology. You are a man without awareness of yourself or your past, a man of

unconscious cruelty; a child who has dabbled in what he believes to be magic, who cozens the credulous into belief because of his blind voyaging into areas where anyone would lose their soul, except this deaf rotting hulk.

Who do you serve, except the forces of chaos in this rotten world? Yes, I'll get you your drugs so you can go upstairs, and I hope never see you again. *(Phone)* Demandez à Monsieur Diderot qu'il apporte l'héroine.

LARIA. Where does he get it?

MME POITIER. He's a police chief, isn't he?

LARIA. How come he's got this funny hard patch on his stomach?

MME POITIER. He uses heroin. At his desk in the prefecture, he has a drawer, with a syringe with a weak solution in it. In meetings which sometimes go on for eight hours, he leans forward as if to get something out . . . and injects himself in the stomach. It's because the job's so dull. *(*DIDEROT *comes in with towel and heroin.)*

LARIA. You a magician? What grade?

MME POITIER. I'm retired. *(*CROWLEY *takes heroin and injects.)*

LARIA. What are you going upstairs for. Beast?

CROWLEY. A magical working. There's a woman.

LARIA. But I was up there with Diderot. There's nobody there. I looked in every room.

CROWLEY. Madame Poitier assured me that there was. It's conceivable that she could be wrong. Or is it?

LARIA. Who's your guardian? How d'you summon them?

MME POITIER. I don't have one. I look after myself.

LARIA. Don't you have to have one to protect you if something goes wrong in a manifestation?

MME POITIER. Nothing every does go wrong.

CROWLEY. This certainly is a weak solution. *(Finishes injecting)* Before I go upstairs, I would like to show Madame Poitier something. Just Madame Poitier. Everyone else out.

DIDEROT. But I wanted to see a trick!

CROWLEY. Everyone but Madame Poitier out. *(To* LARIA*)* You, too.

MME POITIER. We're going to be all by ourselves, eh?

DIDEROT *and* LARIA *exit.*

Music. Incantatory, throbbing. Lights change.

POITIER *is half amused, half frightened by the display.*

MME POITIER. How skilful, Mr Crowley! *(Disarmingly)* It reminds me of something I saw at the Opera-Comique, on my first honeymoon. . . *(Pause)* Is this, tell me, sex magic? Or is it just fireworks? *(*POITIER *suddenly starts.)* Ah! Just a moment, there is something crawling round inside my skirt. *(*CROWLEY *watching her from the table, making it happen. She is paralysed with fear.)* Is it a mouse?

I don't want it inside me. It's hard! Ah! It's a **knife!** *(She starts sobbing hysterically.)* Don't cut me there, please have pity. *(She is completely under* CROWLEY'S *spell.)*

CROWLEY. I'm going to do to you what you did to the seven whores.

MME POITIER. Don't cut it out, don't cut it, please.

CROWLEY *(inquisitorial).* Why is there no woman upstairs?

MME POITIER *(sobbing).* I don't know, I don't know. Take that badness out of me, please. Don't cut me.

CROWLEY. Drink my seed.

MME POITIER. No! That's **dirty**! *(*MME POITIER *is vanquished.)*

CROWLEY. If you don't want to be too close to the fountain head, you could eat my shit.

POITER *is weeping hysterically. The encounter is over and he has won this time.*

The lights and the sound go back to normal.

MME POITIER *picks herself up, sniffing.*

CROWLEY. So you were the woman upstairs.

MME POITIER *(pious).* I was going to give you a wonderful time. I was going to appear before you. I was going to refurbish the rooms as they were before the war when the Prince Regent used to stay here. And you would have taught me sex magic in his bed.

CROWLEY. So why did you refuse me down here?

MME POITIER. I wanted to be loved.

DIDEROT *enters.* POITIER *pulls herself together. Flashing them both a dirty look,* POITIER *exits.* DIDEROT *smiles.*

DIDEROT. So, how are you getting on with Madame Poitier?

CROWLEY. Oh, fine.

DIDEROT. She likes the girls, you know? Prefers them to . . . *(He pokes his forefinger through a ring he makes with the other forefinger and thumb.)* She tells me very little. But meanwhile, while we are waiting. . . M'sieur, I have a problem. *(He indicates box.)*

CROWLEY. Is that for me?

DIDEROT. I am not very far advanced in magic.

CROWLEY. How far?

DIDEROT. Very little.

CROWLEY. D'you know the Cabala?

DIDEROT. No.

CROWLEY. Clairvoyancy? Clairaudiency?

DIDEROT. No–it's a simple problem.

CROWLEY. Who's your holy guardian angel?

DIDEROT. I dunno.

CROWLEY. What are the watchtowers?

DIDEROT. On the corners of large prisons--

CROWLEY. On the astral plane. Can you become invisible?

DIDEROT. You mistake me. I can be inconspicuous–I am inconspicuous–but it's magic I want to know. Animal tricks. My wife is a magician, but she won't show me. *(He produces a very small top hat, and a very large stuffed rabbit. Puts them both on the table.)* How is it done? How would you make the rabbit disappear, eh?

CROWLEY. I've no idea.

DIDEROT. M'sieur, a poor policeman who wants to learn a few simple tricks to amuse the orphanage. . .

CROWLEY. Shut your eyes. *(*DIDEROT *shuts them.* CROWLEY *puts the rabbit under the table, turns the hat over, puts his finger on the hat to prevent* DIDEROT *looking under it.)* Open your eyes. You see, to make magic serve worldly interests like you want, is a perversion of its true nature, which stands outside social success completely. Have you tried incest?

DIDEROT. No, not recently. Why?

CROWLEY. Incest is the way which the Egyptian Royal lines used to keep the magical power in the family.

DIDEROT. Would it make me more popular?

CROWLEY. Have you a sister?

DIDEROT. She's forty eight.

CROWLEY. Just the right age.

DIDEROT. My wife has a weak heart. She would die if she found out.

CROWLEY. How could she if you didn't tell her?

DIDEROT. I don't know. But she does. *(Whispers)* She told me Madame Poitier *(draws his finger across his throat)* more than once.

CROWLEY. Have you seen her doing it?

DIDEROT. No.

CROWLEY. Do you have evidence?

Interested, CROWLEY *takes finger off hat.* DIDEROT *immediately turns it over to find it empty.*

DIDEROT *(philosophically).* Exactly, Mr Crowley, where is the evidence? *(*CROWLEY *puts the rabbit back on the table.* DIDEROT *suspicious again.)* Can you really do magic?

CROWLEY. There was a magus in the Far East in the eighth century. He was an adept and had mastered the Indian rope trick. This means, that by arcane forces, the adept balances a large ball of sisal rope on his fist with one finger holding it in place, then hurls it vertically into the sky where it unravels and finally disappears from sight, leaving one end dangling.

DIDEROT. Yes?

CROWLEY. A ruler demanded to see this and the adept was forced to

show him on pain of death. The ruler, much delighted with the display, commanded his young son to climb up the rope. The son did and was soon lost to sight. An hour later, his trunkless head, severed limbs and body fell to the desert.

DIDEROT. Well?

CROWLEY. Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair. *(Pause)* Magic is dangerous.

DIDEROT. Show me something and I'll let you go.

CROWLEY. What do you want to know?

DIDEROT. A trick.

CROWLEY. Life is a trick.

DIDEROT. Show me, please.

CROWLEY. I would have to show you the separation of the body and soul.

DIDEROT. And why is that a trick?

CROWLEY. The disembodied spirit is offered the phantom feast of the material world, and falls for it, till death rescues it. Where's Laria?

DIDEROT. I'm sure Madam Poitier will look after her. Show me this death, then.

CROWLEY *doesn't answer. A wind begins to blow and the lights start to change instead. Music.* CROWLEY *flexes his arms in an incantation, informally, like a sumo wrestler. Then he stops.* DIDEROT *is fascinated.*

DIDEROT. Please, continue. Laria is qute safe. I am sure they are just talking.

The lights go down to a spot on DIDEROT'S *face as he 'sees' what* CROWLEY *describes. Musical chanting mixes in with the wind.*

CROWLEY. Death touched me once on Kanjenchunga, in the form of the spirit of the five peaks. I felt his breath on my beard.

(To DIDEROT*)* To see death, plain, you have to be invisible. You're becoming invisible.

DIDEROT *(prosaic).* I'm becoming invisible.

CROWLEY. Watch your body flicker, waver then disappear. The eyes remain. Two pools of dark. Then they too disappear. You are on the astral plane. North, South, East, West, time doesn't exist, only what you make of them. You are a spectator of the spectacle of the demon of the five peaks.

DIDEROT. Five peaks.

CROWLEY *(behind).* You are invisible in another plane. Before you, the spirit of Kanchenjunga, the spirit of the five peaks. See him. He sees you. The irreducible five in one: from the five, nine glaciers, from the glaciers, fifty rivers, from the rivers a million rhododendrons, wrapped in leeches and shrill clouds.

Ice falls, snow breaks from the ridge.

No footholds in falling ice. The clouds tie the summit in the icy dark. The ice brushes men off like wingless flies. Bind nothing. Let there be no division. All is sacrifice. All entities points of light in the eternal dark. The leeches toil. The men fall. The ice gorge opens, and four men are locked in the ice. Home at last. Four men dead. Number five. Number five. *(Effects conclude, lights to normal.)*

DIDEROT *(cool, interested).* I saw! Well done! It was dusk the porters fell down the crevasse--and you were responsible for that debacle? I am very impressed. No . . . moved. I was even for a moment frightened. That was quite outstanding. It cut to the heart of the matter, as my wife says. She's a magician too, did you know? Welcome to our humble abode.

CROWLEY. Thank you, commissioner, but it's time we were going; we have to catch that boat.

DIDEROT. Two years ago I married Madame Poitier.

CROWLEY *(tired).* Congratulations.

DIDEROT. She doesn't want me to touch her. In the time of the marriage, I have been six hundred and sixty six times to the brothel. And yet, I love her. She admires you.

CROWLEY. She's jealous.

DIDEROT. Don't you think it strange, that someone like her should want to marry a poor policeman? I'm so sorry I'm keeping you talking when you want to get aboard the boat. I'd like to give you something to take with you though. We have some refined opium which we impounded from a Chinese freighter. Come *(*DIDEROT *waves the passports enticingly in front of the tired* CROWLEY*.)* Life in Sicily must have been paradise. I envy you in the creation of a new world religion. What a pity the fascists threw your brave example out. Come. *(They eixt.)*

The MAITRE D' *comes on to the 'UPSTAIRS', repositioning a table and bringing a cheval mirror. Music begins immediately* DIDEROT *finishes.* MME POITIER *and* LARIA *enter as the* MAITRE D' *concludes and exits.*

MME POITIER. What's that between your breasts?

LARIA. The mark of the Beast.

MME POITIER *(to herself).* Salope. Cheap jewelery. Filth.

LARIA. The Scarlet Woman must be loud and adulterous and wear finery.

MME POITIER. Doesn't sex magic say anything about washing?

LARIA. No. This is a magical working. The dirt is symbolic of the earth.

MME POITIER. You've practically no breasts.

LARIA. Look at my essence. The uglier, the unhappier, the better, the more the true nature is revealed. Glorify the great whoredom and we shall become free. The law is do what thou wilt. You will play the man.

MME POITIER. Turn around. Head back. *(She produces a flick knife. The police chief enters.)*

DIDEROT. Hey–Madame Poitier! *(*MME POITER *slowly puts the knife down.)* J'ai vu–un grand montage–là bas! Il est pas mal–quoi?

LARIA. Two is better than one, a magical act. We will invoke Choronozon. You will take me from the front, and you in the mouth. This is an act which invariably secures freedom.

DIDEROT. Sex magic, yes?

LARIA. We invoke–freedom. I'd like some brandy. We invoke the Law.

MME POITIER *(to* DIDEROT). Get her a brandy. You can have her when I've finished. *(*LARIA *sits frontstage* DIDEROT *exits.)*

LARIA. I'm so tired.

MME POITIER. Kick off your shoes.

LARIA. I'm so tired. I sometimes feel. . . I sometimes feel that . . . the difference between being free and not being free is so small that you can't see. You might just as well not bother. *(The* MAITRE D' *hands* MME POITIER *a pair of lighted candles which she places downstage of the table.)* And sometimes I can't remember the words of the great work. And it's all so much harder, when you've got thrush, and gonorrhea, and crabs. . . I sometimes wonder why some of us are just tessellated pricks, and the rest of us are tessellated cunts . . . the latter being a special sort of punishment for those whose ambition it is to surpass themselves. The receiving. The earth. All those passive bits in the I Ching. The dark, quiet bit. Surpass yourself, he says, bring yourself up to my level. I can be passive and womanly. I can lay around the left bank waiting for stokers on leave. Teach them the law. Stoke what though wilt. Stoke the little children away. Their little smiles, little rosebud lips, flaming up the chimney, so it rains smiles. Reach out for the active bit, standing on someone.

Humiliation. Power. But he's alright, but I did cry, when it turned out it was the kids' turn to die. I did cry a bit then, but it's stupid, really, to cry because it's all in the great plan. I'm a pile of liver in the corner, with a hauntingly beautiful mouth . . . my soul is a star.

But to know you're dead before you start, to come into the first bleeding round, crying. . . Look! Liver lips . . . crying! And my first period my mother wouldn't touch me. I thought I was dying.

The curse comes from the other people. The Beast lifts the curse.

Everything is equal, before the great work. I was nothing before he found me. A dead star. When I leave him, I'll be nothing again. If you think blood and spunk is the ultimate experience, you're right. That's when it all happens. The rest is . . . the other side of the moon.

And is she going to kill me? I'm fully protected . . . I don't care. I think that I despise the human race a bit less from where I am. than from any other place. . . But why do there have to be opposites–Scarlet Woman and the Beast, the cruel and the meek. Why don't we all be Beasts, and beat each other? Nobody ever said why . . . Why we couldn't all be Beasts. *(*MME POITIER *comes forward and starts to wash her feet.)*

Perhaps it's an additional refinement to the magical future of the world. Who taught the Beast how to be the Beast? Was it in his nature?

Naar . . . it was in his upbringing, wasn't it? All he did was turn it upside down, and watch the worms dancing in the sunlight. And then clean, clean, clean. Everyone is clean, everyone's a star. Are you going to kill me? You could get away with it.

MME POITIER. I'll try to be good to you. But I have to be boss.

LARIA. You can't guarantee anything. You can't make bargains. You can't trade in human flesh like the rest of the world. I couldn't make bargains with the secret chiefs to make my child stay alive, so I didn't try. . . Either they want you, or they don't. The rest is . . . just life, but sometimes the colours were so bright you'd think you were flying. I am the Scarlet Woman.

MME POITIER. Of course. I'm interested in your power. You're the channel for the power of the Beast.

LARIA. Yeah, a lot of power. Not cheap tricks for the crowd, but the incarnation of a being, glorious, timeless, stretching back aeons. Bring in the new aeon, with its hail of blood. I really mean something in the universe. And what I do means something. I mean, I write them down in my diary, all my magical acts.

Health. Sanity. Freedom. Beast says, musn't be afraid of madness. Musn't be afraid of going over the edge. What edge? We're all in space. We're all planets, whirling round and round, blazing trails of glory in the dark. I'm not like the other scarlet women he had. Second-rate bloody women. Gloria! Read Gloria's magic diary. I did once, and not one thing in it that I couldn't have down twice as well.

There's only one Beast, One Logos of the Aeon, and I'm his Scarlet Woman. The interpreter of the book of the law. Nothing can unite the divided unless it's love. Everything else is just the fuel. Lust. Hate. Fuel for the scarlet woman to burn in

the heart. *(Stands)*

If you're the scarlet woman –you got to be proud! You got to be wicked in front of everybody–don't hold anything back. Steal from the poor, kill the rich. Such the enemies' blood! Yes, that's very, very good! *(The lighting has shrunk down to a murky, murderous gloom.* MME POITIER'S *knife gleams in the dark.)*

Go on, then. Kill me. I'm ready. Beast would like that. I'm a millstone round his neck. Go on, you've done this before, haven't you. Quite a dab hand at killing your own sex. You've made a pile of money out of saying "no" to people. I think all these people who say yes to everything like me, they must be quite a threat. Go on, I dare you. Kill me. Let's see where your polite behaviour stops. *(*MME POITIER *makes a feeble and genteel stab at* LARIA. LARIA *knocks the knife away and it falls on the floor.)*

You can't deal with real passion, can you? Yours is all fake. You've squeezed it back till it died. I was ready to die for him, and you fucked it up. You miserable, dried up old cunt. You've been fantasising for fifty years and now when it comes to the point, you can't do it in real life at all!

Riddled with confusion and guilt, MME POITIER *totters to the back and turns on a light switch. The lights go bright.* DIDEROT *is visible at the back, unobtrusive as always. Alert and attentive.*

LARIA *(satisfied).* He got to you in the end, didn't he. *(Confidential)* Isn't he a bastard.

MME POITIER. Yes, he hurt me inside. . . He was rough . . . I had done nothing to offend him. . . I was impotent in front of his rudeness. I am sorry. I thought to take it out on you. I am too old for this. I should not have become angry with him. I did not want him in the way he wanted me. You see, he destroys his women.

LARIA. Well, what did you do with yours? Did anyone put them back together again? You're no better than he is.

MME POITIER *(serious).* I did repent. *(*LARIA *laughs coarsely.)* Laria, have you ever thought of a separate existence?

LARIA *(relaxed).* From the Beast? No, I'm his Scarlet Woman.

MME POITIER. Only for as long as you want to be.

LARIA. Are you offering me a job?

MME POITIER. No.

LARIA. Well, what then? *(*MME POITIER *takes a silken rope from* DIDEROT.*)*

MME POITIER. This rope is life. *(Tugs at it)* Feel it! Strong. . . Some people are tightrope walkers, and some people prefer

to have themselves tied up. If you stay with this man, you will be tied up.

LARIA. But if I left him, I wouldn't be a scarlet woman anymore.

MME POITIER. Why not?

LARIA. I'd be nobody. I couldn't leave him.

MME. POITIER. Very well. We will raise the stakes. That is the door to the quay, and that is the door to the railway station. *(Points.)* If you choose the railway station, I will give you a ticket to wherever you want to go. If you choose to go to the quay with Mr Crowley, we will let you go, but first, you will have unfinished business with the commissioner. I'm not sure what. Something they don't allow him to do to the girls at the brothel.

DIDEROT *(soberly).* Smash the face. Split the nostril. Black the eye.

MME POITIER. Laria, is it so difficult to turn away from the pain? Do you really think that if you stopped hurting, you would cease to exist?

LARIA *(triumphant in her masochism).* What's the good of talking?

She takes DIDEROT *by the hand and begins to draw him off. He turns and shrugs at* MME POITIER. *The* MAITRE D' *begins to move the table and mirror upstage for the final scene.* MME POITIER *weeps tears of shame and frustration.*
Music ends. Lights dim downstage. Harbour noises. CROWLEY *enters with suitcase. Sits on it.*
LARIA *makes a long slow entrance through the lamplight, toward him. Halfway there she turns and spits out some blood.* CROWLEY *gets up and turns away, deliberately stares out to sea.* LARIA *sits down unsteadily on the suitcase that he has brought out with him.*

LARIA. Give me my passport.

CROWLEY. Get up. We're going to be late.

LARIA. I'm not going with you. I've had enough.

CROWLEY. Oh? Where were you thinking of going?

LARIA. America. *(pause)* Do you know why I hate you? I'm leaving you? *(Pause)* You could have stopped me being kicked and beaten up and raped by that police commissioner. You could.

CROWLEY. And so could you.

LARIA. You do sacrifice people. You do like their blood. And now I've given and given and there's nothing left to give. Why don't you go and find someone else and live off them. You just use people. Go on, fuck off. There are plenty of women stupid enough to let people like you walk all over them. I'm leaving you, understand? You left me in that shithole, for them to do what they liked with me, and you didn't care a shit about little Binky. You don't care so I'm leaving you. I doubt if you'd care about that much either. *(Arch)* It doesn't affect the law of 'Do what

thou Wilt.' *(*CROWLEY *takes a passport out of his jacket.)*
CROWLEY *(checking).* This is your passport. . .

LARIA *holds up her hand for it and* CROWLEY *throws it off stage.*

LARIA. Where is it? What have you done with it?
CROWLEY. Can you swim?
LARIA. No.
CROWLEY. It's in the water. Over there. *(He points* LARIA *stands unsteadily.)*
LARIA. Why? Why did you do that?
CROWLEY. You won't need it if you're not coming with me. I can always find another Scarlet Woman.
LARIA. Wait a minute. I don't have any money.
CROWLEY. There are plenty of sailors.
LARIA. No thanks.
CROWLEY. It's your decision. But if you don't save yourself, no one else will save you. And I'm not looking after you any more.
LARIA *(pointing to her bruises).* Call that looking after me?
CROWLEY *(shrugs).* Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.
LARIA *(automatically).* Love is the Law, love under will. *(Pause.)* Well. *(She turns to go)* Goodnight.

CROWLEY *stares out at the darkened sea, sitting on the case again.* LARIA *suddenly turns back to look at him. Music, as at the end of ACT ONE, energetic, incantatory, then, a split second later, blackout.*

Flaming Bodies